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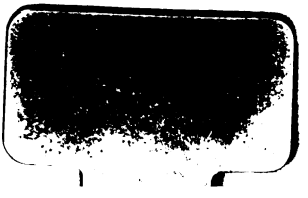

THE

MARTYRDOM OF KELAVANE.

A Poem.

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PREFACE.

THE life of Kelavane, a princess of Georgia, who suffered martyrdom during the reign of Abbas the Great, is one of the many instances of truth that is "stranger than fiction." Her story is told by that enlightened and instructive traveller, Chardin, who visited Persia and the Caucasus in the years 1670-72, and whose authority is uniformly respected by subsequent travellers and historians. He gives an outline of Circassian history, from the time of the conquest of Georgia by Ismail Sooffee, the founder of the Sooffavean dynasty, in the middle of the fifteenth century, down to the period of his visit. This history is one continuous narrative of persecution. Christianity appears to have existed among the Caucasian tribes from the earliest Christian times; but it was mixed up almost uniformly with a species of paganism. And even where the priests had most influence, their object was

less to regulate the faith and life of the people than to maintain the nominal universality of their Church. Chardin says that they told him they "do not maintain their embassies for any benefit which they reap, but merely for the glory of the Church." Yet, without any vitality of faith, the Georgians resisted temptation and persecution; and, in the days of Abbas the Great, the people were allowed to worship God according to their creed.

It is singular that during all these ages of persecution, and while Christianity existed only in name, the Persian kings never succeeded in erecting a mosque in Georgia, except one, within the fort; and then the priest never showed himself but once, to call the people to prayers, he having been greeted by a shower of stones when he made his appearance. In a short time popular zeal tore down the building. These circumstances induced Abbas to extend to Georgia that freedom of conscience which he boasted was one of the privileges of his reign. The ruling prince was alone excepted: it behoved him to profess the Mahomedan faith. The Princess Kelavane, who had been brought up a Christian, succeeded to the princely dignity on the death of her father and her husband, but refused to accept it on the condition of changing her faith. No threat could overcome her resolution; and, according to Chardin, the Shah, who

would neither retract his commands nor allow them to be evaded, sent orders to the Governor of Shiraz to make her a convert at any cost. The Governor omitted nothing to overcome her constancy. He made her suffer eight years' fearful persecution, by so much the more cruel that he renewed her tortures every day till she died at last on flaming coals, in the year 1624. Her body was thrown to the birds of the air; but the Augustines conveyed it secretly, to the young prince, her son.

Such is a summary outline of Chardin's account of events which occurred within the memory of living men at the period of his sojourn in the country; and to his narrative, and the facts contained in the general history of the time, the Author of the following story of the Princess Kelavane has done his best in the main to adhere.

THE

MARTYRDOM OF KELAVANE.

I.

PROEM.

KNOW ye the story of Queen Kelavane?
She was no daughter of the days of joy;
Her tears were countless as the stars of heaven.
The radiant beauty and the queenly grace,
That glorified the morning of her years,
Were sighed away in sorrow long ere noon.
The fervour of her solitary faith,
That burn'd like some lone beacon of the sea,
With no kind neighbourhood of hopeful hearts,
Kept shining through the tempest all night long,
Until it faded in the dawn of heaven.
And so it was, because she stood alone

Upon that solemn pinnacle of truth,
From which her kindred and her people shrank;
And whence she saw the glory of the heavens,
Above the tempest, as above the cloud.

The weight of age, and grief, and Persian bonds,
Had bow'd her grey-haired father to the dust.
And he was dead. His grave was scarcely green.
Her youthful prince, the father of her babes,
Had perish'd in the Anatolian wars,
The soldier of the Shah against the Turk:
And Kelavane was princess of the land.
Alas the day! her greatness was her woe.
It was not that the calm secluded life
Of Eastern dames was now to her unknown;
Nor that Great Abbas ruled the Georgian land,
And mocked her with a territorial name,
That made her, though a queen, the slave of slaves;
Nor even that her hapless people mourned
O'er violated hearths, and ravaged fields,
And Persian harems with their children fill'd:
But that the royal place, which was her right,
The Shah forbade a Christian prince to hold,
Or yet the heir to shun, or give away:

And sent his mandate to forswear her faith—
Her mother's faith, the nation's common creed;
And that dear Lord, to whom her humble heart
Had turned with holy solace all her days,
For the Arabian Prophet to forego.
What dread oppression to a soul like hers!
In vain she prayed; in vain she scorned the threats
Of Kouli Khan, the Satrap of the Shah,
With all the ancient daring of her race.
She was a mother, though she was a queen;
And when the Persian spoke of hostages,
Her love rose up triumphant over all,
And for a moment made her like a child;
Till silenced by the shadow of a fear,
That darken'd the eternity of light,
It sank for help into the arms of faith—
And thus her weakness grew her strength again.
Yet all the people gloried in their creed;
A creed that was a shadow, and a dream.
No mosque was seen in all the Georgian land;
The first that raised its head was overthrown,
In Teflis, by the angry people's hands.
Nor did the Shah rebuild the ruined fane.
For this one freedom they could strike and die.

Strange! that a nation's most heroic men,
No love of liberty, no patriot hope,
No deep-souled indignation for their wrongs,
Could light to death with sacrificial fire;
While this devotion to their Christian name,
A wandering echo of the Word of Truth,
Could wake from all its last and deepest depths,
That might of heart that makes a nation free.
The Persian knew their weakness and their strength,
And gave their creed a freedom he denied
In all things else—demanding this alone,
Their Prince must serve the Prophet. So it was
That prince and people had stood long apart:
And hordes of idle and licentious priests,
Arrayed in all the borrow'd forms of truth,
The pious shadows of an empty creed,
Through which their followers sauntered at their ease,
Each cheering his peculiar way of life
With pleasant sins, which made the churchmen fat.

But far above this hopeless waste of life,
This pathless wilderness of self-deceit,
Rose up the calm, sweet front of Kelavane,
To combat, in her sorrow and her love,

Delusion and apostasy, alone.
To combat, and to suffer, and to die,
Without one single counsellor whose soul
Could rise like hers o'er earthly circumstance,
Where truth was manifest, and duty clear.
The patriarch Sothemus loved her well,—
Her father's brother, and the church's head.
But he believed in small necessities,
When easy remedies were not at hand,
And shrank alike from conflict with the priests
And with the Persian, loving well his ease.
Thus did she stand alone amid her woe,
In her Zenana, with her little ones,
With only One to whom she looked for aid—
The widow's support and the orphan's stay.

II.

FALLING SHADOWS.

The sun is low in Carthuell[1]
This day!
The maids of Teflis mourn;
And wailings from the city swell;
And from the mountains borne
Come the voices of dismay.

Oh Kelavane! the voices say.
The mountain shepherd winds his horn
To sadder notes; no lover's lay
Is heard; no note of warlike scorn.
And ye may hear the chieftains tell,
That nothing waits a land forlorn,
But perish or obey.
And 'tis all for Kelavane
That the people weeping go,

With their cloaks upon their faces,
And their footsteps sad and slow.
Kelavane, the Princess of the land!

Is there no warrior hand,
Is there no patriot band,
Is there no heart, to stand
Forward to shield her, all in this hour of her woe?

No, no, no!

Where are the mosques of the Prophet? and where
The voice of the Muezzin calling to prayer?

Not here, young Prince Aymon. The call would be vain—
The mosque is no temple for Christian men.

Ye say ye are Christian men. Go to!
Ye have seen the rising mosque o'erthrown,
And a hand rise up for every stone,
Though the lion might rage in his Persian lair.
Ay, heart and hand were firm and true,
And worth your Christian breeding then:

But now your hands are as women's grown;
Ye fold them up in a barren despair.
Ye once defied the Persian pride,
And why not do the same again?
Are the stout hands weak? are the bold hearts gone?
Do ye sit and spin in the women's chamber?
Do ye paint your cheeks, and plait your hair,
And deck your necks with gold and amber?
Are the stout hands weak? are the bold hearts gone?
Is there no Iberian blood to spare
For the flower of the old Iberian strain?
Ye once defied the Persian's pride,
And why not do the same again?

'Tis all in vain. The people mourn
The sorrows that they cannot mend;
The Persian lies around Darbend;
The Turkish Sultan's soldiers flee
By Terabazon[2] and the sea.
'Tis all in vain. The people mourn
The sorrows that they cannot mend;
And ye may hear the chieftains say,
That nothing waits a land forlorn,
But perish or obey.

The sun is low in Carthuell!

Is it so very low,
That ye should lay aside so soon
Your arrows and your bow?

It is setting, it is setting! and its blood-red ray is fretting
All the edges of the mountain, all the roof-tops of the palace,
With a dying flush of beauty's trembling terror ere it go.
'Tis the red lips of the sleeper,
By which alone we know
There is life within his pulses,
Save when pain his form convulses.
See, the clouds that overveil us,
And the darkness grown deeper,
Proclaim the coming tempest to the valley down below.

The sun is low in Carthuell! The river flows amain,
Like squadrons of white horsemen, as they charge upon the plain.

I do not see the hills at all. Where can the young men go
In such a night of storms as this? My heart is very low!
Heigho! heigho!

Is it so very low, my child, that thou shouldst leave thy loom?
I've seen the sun of Atteghe[3] break through a deeper gloom;
I've heard the tramp of horses, and the shout of gallant men,
In nights of wilder tempests; but our sons are changed since then.
And rest thee, sure and safe, my child: the warriors of the land
Are sitting with their women, with the spindles in their hand;
Their steeds may weary in their stalls, and chaff and toss the mane;
The horsemen keep the inner halls, and bravely blame the rain;
And ask how goes the tempest now; and ask how looks the sky.
Some grey-haired fathers fret, no doubt, and say, there was a time;

And give their beards an angry pull, and say, there was a time;
And take their old swords from the wall, and say, there was a time:
But never fear, my daughter dear, that time is long gone by.

That time had long gone by, and its glory lived in vain,
A tale of old, by elders told, that made ambition pain.
Before the times of Ismael Khan, when all the land was free,
Before the Persian dared to pass 'twixt Taurus and the sea,
The Romans fled from Colchis, and the Pontic armies failed
To climb the deep Caucasian steep, a thousand times assailed;
The Tartars of the wilderness who followed Ghenghis Khan,
The Russ who crossed the steppes of Bell, the Turks from Erivan,
The Persian hosts from Ardevil were routed every one,

By those brave mountain children of the old heroic race,
Of that old cradle of our kind, that knew no foreign face.
Ye hear the story in the woods in many a camping-place,
Or on the mountain solitudes when resting from the chase,
Or in the merry evenings when the minstrel tale is told,
And every sabre rings to hear of those brave days of old:
A story that was ended when the old heroic land
Lay bleeding at the Persian's foot, with chains on every hand;
A story long renewed again, in glory and in woe,
When, rooted like their hills, they stood against their Russian foe;
When Mansour[4] and his murids rode the first invaders down,
And Shamyl Bey, as brave as they, restored the old renown.
The proud Ossetian, clad in mail that some Crusader wore,[5]
Sweeps down from white Mount Elburz along the Caspian shore;

And Lesghian rifles from the rocks their bullets pour
like hail,
And every hill of Daghestan keeps watch o'er every
vale.
There, with his bag of millet, and his flask of Georgian
wine,
The Lesghian warrior watches, along the Russian
line;
The brave Ossetian rides for weeks, regardless of his
ease,
The warriors of Daghestan, keep watch among the
trees.
They die—oh shame on England! they die—oh shame
on France!
By tens of thousands every year to check the foes
advance.
They see, each night, some village light the sky, with
ruddy glare;
They see, each day, their dearest ones lie cold and
blackened there;
They see their flocks all plundered, and their fields
of grain on fire,
The helpless infant slaughtered beside the grey-haired
sire.

But yet in death, and daily fray, they hold their native hills,
Though many a beardless lad this day his father's saddle fills.
Oh, well did gallant Mansour, and his fiery murids, ride,
And Schamyl Bey, as brave as they, rolls back the battle tide.
Why were there not such fearless hearts, to sweep the Persian plain,
And hold the Georgian frontier, in the days of Kelavane?
Alas! the heart was broken; alas! the spirit dead;
Save where one single token of freedom raised its head.
The house of God, the cross of God, the signs of faith, were there,
Whereof the form still lingered without piety or prayer;
Whereof the form was guarded with a fervour strong as death,
As if the iron fragments of a martyr-founded faith.
To guard that faith the very rocks had thundered from the hills,
The rivers raged like cataracts, like rivers little rills;
The women, fired to frenzy, would have conquered women's fears,

To arrows turned their spindles, and their distaffs
turned to spears;
And prince and clown with fierce consent stood like a
fortress wall,
An adamantine battlement to guard their little all.
Their little all of freedom, their little all of truth,
The wreck of what had been a creed in its triumphant
youth,
A church they never entered, a faith they never
felt,
A holy altar clothed with awe, whereat they never
knelt;
To which they sent their cummin, and their myrrh,
and mint, and rue,
Their tithes of all that they possessed, save that most
truly due.
But she, the Princess Kelavane, lived in her blessed
creed,
A simple, holy, loving life, in thought, and word, and
deed:
A widowed mother, called to bear a subject prince's
load,
And with apostate hands forswear the blessed cross of
God,

Or suffer more than daily death, or suffer shame and
woe,
Whatever tortures fiends could frame, or martyrs
undergo.
Yet not one hand was raised for her from out that
world of pain,
That swelled within her people's hearts for noble
Kelavane.

III.

THE CLOUD.

Great Abbas sat before his snow-white tent
Amid the vineyards of Mazanderan,
The dark green valleys of Mazanderan.
"Bring wine!" he cried. Now Abbas was a saint,
For he had swept the mosque of beauteous Ali.[6]
The Prophet can forbid, but not prevent;
So Abbas quaffed his cups right freely off.
"These rare Armenian rogues from Erivan
Are most consistent Christians in their wine,"
He said, with broad-faced mirth and ready scoff;
"I'll give them all their freedom, every man,
For that rare vinous virtue of their creed.
And here they'll find a land of grapes and swine
To make a Christian's paradise, indeed.
Roll out the Turkish heads! Lay line by line!
And, wise Sedrazim, you will keep the tally."

So Abbas, three parts drunk, and one divine
Because he swept the mosque of beauteous Ali,
Told off the grizly trophies, one by one,
As was the custom, of the Persian Khan.[7]

The king abroad, in his religious wars,
Was not that Abbas whom his courtiers saw,
So steeped in luxury and clothed with awe,
With flaming eyes that glowed like baleful stars.
He doffed the purple when he drew the sword,
Now more than monarch and now less than man.
His presence was the terror of his foes,
And of the lords who stood around his throne;
But through the common host his praises rose;
The people, all, applauded, and adored;
To them, the light of heaven around him shone;
Their father, and their idol, and their lord,
Their warrior king who led the battle van,
Their royal saint, who swept the mosque of Ali.

"The Governor of Shiraz? send him here,"
Said royal Abbas, counting still the heads,
Whereof the wise Sedrazim kept the tally.
"What said you, Meerza? Lift that head again.

So that was Ali Pasha. Throw it near.
A brave old soldier! Now that he is slain
I'll say it to his honour. Take a spear,
And put the head upon 't, and tell your men
That this is he, who in the Georgian wars,
Twice broke their ranks, and held their arms at bay,
While Ismail slank behind the walls of Kars.
Two thousand heads! What brings you here to-day?"

"Oh, mighty Shah, thy slave has come once more
To own his failure to enforce thy will."

"What! Darest thou, slave of slaves! Why, once before
We bade thee all our mandates well fulfil,
Or better perish in thy due disgrace
Than show thyself before our royal face."

"In vain I threatened!"

"Abbas threats in vain!
Go tell the desert winds that tale of folly!
By Allah, better all the traitor race
Lay like the trunks from which these heads are ta'en,
To feed the ravening wolves of Anadoly!"

"No pain, no suffering, neither steel nor fire,
Can daunt the stubborn soul of Kelavane."

"You lie, you weakling fool, you silken page!
Faint-hearted caitiff, do not stir mine ire
With fables of the Amazonian age!
There's not a woman lives but fears to die.
And say'st thou there is one who dares defy
All suffering, and disgrace, and treat with scorn
The power of Abbas? Go, 'tis all a lie!
For such a woman never yet was born."

A moment more, an armed hand was raised;
A fierce, bright scimitar, with cruel glare,
Flashed past the kneeler's neck. Great Abbas gazed
With eyes that seemed twin brothers of the sword;
Then with a tipsy jollity he laughed
At his poor satrap; gave the sign to spare;
And then another purple bumper quaffed.
"See that you wring the truth from out this lie,"
He said, with death in every slow, hard word;
"Make this proud princess yield, or thou shalt die!"

The trembling courtiers bowed them, and adored;
Ten thousand voices rose along the valley,

To sound the praises of their warrior lord,
Their royal saint, who swept the mosque of Ali.

"Great Shah," the grave Sedrazim said, "my voice
Was never raised against your royal weal—"
"This is the prelude of some fine advice!
Their's contradiction veiled in this appeal,
As wide from my opinion as the poles."
"The lion should not go to war with mice!"
"Good sooth, that's certain, wise Sedrazim; so
We are for once unanimous. What then?"
"They will elude him in their narrow holes,
In bushes, and in fissures of the rocks."
"Unquestionably clear, sagacious lord."
"Their insignificance defies and mocks
His might."
"Most true, grave moollah, every word."
"Though he could crush them, with his kingly tread,
By very thousands."
"Well, that's very plain."
"Then, good my lord, the Princess Kelavane—"
"Nay, nay, wise moollah, she is not a mouse:
A very panther of the mountain she.
The noblest scion of a princely house,

She were the fittest mate on earth for me;
But my command shall never be gainsaid.
And for her people,—not one Georgian chief
Will raise his hand, against the Persian king,
Or risk his head, to save his prince from grief.
Nay, more, not one of you would do that thing,
If ye but thought Shah Abbas near his fall.
His courtier lords, his slaves, his veriest tool,
The crouching trembling things that he has made,
Each one, I know you well, would turn and flee!
Ye have the wit of Mutawukal's fool,[8]
Ye courtiers of the sunshine, one and all.
But if the Georgians dared revolt—what then?
I'd set upon each brow my royal seal:
I'd crush them all like ants beneath my heel:
And make the land a desert void of men,
Where wolves and ravens batten on the dead,
And the eternal winds should wail unheard,
Save by the prowling beast and loathsome bird.
The world shall know that Abbas is obeyed!"

IV.

THE COMING GLOOM.

THERE's love for woman's tenderness,
And honour for her truth?
But whence the strength that comes to bless
The softness of her youth?

The light that shines in wise old hearts,
The warmth of early years;
How comes that each its gift imparts
In her sad time of tears?

That youthful heads with wisdom crown'd,
And hearts with hope renewed,
Rise up from sorrow, and the ground,
And weaknesses subdued?

A tree whose leafy loveliness
Is shaped in beauty's form,
To hide, beneath a robe of grace,
The strength that bides the storm.

The lark that, soaring o'er its nest,
Goes heavenward with its song;
The desert bird that wounds its breast
To feed its famished young.

A remnant of the early faith,
Whose heart-deep fountains flowed
Through love and sorrow, life and death,
Straight to the throne of God.

And whence comes that sweet light that breaks
Through all her night of fear?
And whence that sacred hope that makes
Her day-dawn ever near?

And whence the wealth of autumn tide,
That sleeps within her spring?
And whence doth summer, in her pride,
Old winter's wisdom bring?

The faith that works like lowly moss,
To clothe the barren scene,
The love that like the ivy grows,
Where nothing else is green.

And beauty fading from the eye,
Doth flower within her heart,
As sunsets to the darkening sky
New worlds of joy impart;

And fill the void that faithless fears
Had dreaded in the night,
With all the heaven of golden spheres
That roll in endless light.

The sunbeam through a cloud of vines is shedding
drops of amber,
And through the long, low lattice shines within a silent
chamber.
And there, like some sweet summer eve, whose melan-
choly grace,
The falling shadows that bereave the land of love-
liness,

Make sweeter for its chastened gloom, sits queenly Kelavane,
Amid her griefs, in that old room, her children and her pain.
All calmly grand the cedars stand on every sunny slope,
The hills are clothed on every hand with forests to the top;
The river flashes through the trees, and foams upon the rocks;
The woods are fringed with cottages, the vales are filled with flocks;
And vineyards here, and orchards there, and sunshine over all;
Alas! that on a scene so fair the spoiler's hand should fall.
Alas! that those who gaze on it are gazing through their tears,
That eyes are dim, and cheeks are wet, and hearts are full of fears!
Her snow-white arms the princess wound, about each little one—
A rose with blushing buds set round, and one of them half-blown.
Like sorrow in the arms of joy, half soothed into a smile,
Her rosebud girl, her rosebud boy, half soothe her heart the while.

The half-blown rose, Mignonnè, was the sister of the queen,
And sought within her eyes the cause that dimmed their sweet serene.
All three are resting on her breast, with murmurs soft and low—
Three doves that there have all their nest, the heart that loves them so.
As plays the calm sweet summer sea with children on the beach,
With sunny ripples dancing free, their rosy feet to reach,
So plays the princess with their hair, and wipes their tears away,
While breathing still a mother's prayer, amid her seeming play.
And gentle murmurs flow and flow, as from a hidden rill,
Some mossy woodland bank below, when all around is still.
And thus took shape each loving tone so sorrowfully mild :—
"My own Mignonnè, dearest one, my sister, and my child!

I nursed thee, sweet Mignonnè, and I smoothed thy glossy hair;
I led thee up and down, amid the dear old gardens there.
My little merry sister, thou wert all my daily care;
And thou, and these, poor helpless twain, are very dear to me—
The all that now are left me of the loving ones of earth!
The sorrow comes too early, love, to cloud thy childhood's mirth;
Oh, would that I could bear it all for thee, and thee, and thee!
Nay, weep not, sweet Mignonnè, sorrow suits not with thy years!
The Father of the fatherless is watching o'er you all;
Nay, weep not, though His blessed hand seem heavily to fall,
It leaveth still a holy peace to dry the mourner's tears.
Look up, my little ones, my life—my bliss, and yet my woe!
Oh, but for thee, this hour would be no grievous thing to bear!
Oh, but for thee, no Persian threat could make thy mother fear!

Oh, but for thee, I could have died with those who loved me so!
Alas! Ah me! O God of love, I do not doubt thy love!
I do not fear that thou wilt e'er forsake this orphan three,
In this sad pilgrimage of grief that waits on them and me.
Be with them, bless them, keep them safe, O blessed Lord above!
Nay, do not weep, my dear Mignonnè!"

"Oh, alas! alas!"

"There's hope of joy to come, Mignonnè!"

"Oh, alas! alas!
My sister and my mother, and mine all, mine only one,
Could I but lay me down and die, and this great sorrow pass
So satisfied! Oh, poor propitiation me alone!
Were I but worthy, sister, oh how gladly would I rise

And meet my fate, with all the sorrow, love, of leaving thee,
Transformed at once into the one great joy of saving thee,
And thee, and thee! Oh, sister dear, it were a sacrifice
As gladly given as ever martyr's soul to Paradise."

"I know it well, my sister and my child; pray dry thine eyes,
And I will tell my dear one what to do. There is a land
Where foot of stranger never yet hath trod,[9] more fair, more grand
Than any other region under heaven. That country lies
Beneath the shield of Elburz, and it is the citadel,
The garden, and the hope of all the mountain race, the home,
And cradle of their freedom, and mankind. And safe and well
'Tis guarded by the high eternal hills, all round and round.
Its paths are narrow as a city gate. No foe can come

From any country through the long ravines; no force assail
Its battlements, which God's own hand has raised, and dreadly armed
With thunders and the avalanche of snow. With waters sweet,
And fertile plains, and grapes and flocks, the happy people dwell
Contented there, by storms untouched, by no proud foe alarmed;
An ancient race kept pure within this ancientest of climes.
And there may my dear children live, and trust to better times.
Young Aymon of the hills, the chieftain's heir, so nobly known,
When with my princely lord, his attelick,[10] lies hidden near,
To guard thee and these loved ones. So, Mignonnè, do not fear,
But you will be their mother dear, till these sad times be gone."

"Oh, sister Kelavane, my life, I cannot leave thee so!
Oh, let me be with thee to comfort thee, to pray with thee,

To die with thee! I cannot go, I cannot part with thee!
What would'st thou do but weep, dear life? Alas! I cannot go!"

"You know not what a path is ours, what fearful perils lie
Before you and these little ones; nay, more, you cannot know,
How all my soul is troubled by the thought, how weak am I
To see you. Through my being all the mother's love doth flow,
And melts my purpose as the summer's sun doth melt the snow.
You do uncrown me: I am not a queen when you are near.
For oh! the mother's blood is milk, the mother's love is fear.
What sound is that? Away! Are we too late? It is our foe!"

V.

A TAPER TO THE SUN.

"Who comes? The Patriarch! Good morrow, father."

"Hail, gracious lady! Bless you, little ones!"

"The hour is come?"

"'Tis come!"

"I am prepared.
One kiss, my darling ones! One poor dear kiss!
And now, my own Mignonné, fare ye well!
My children! oh! farewell! Take them away!
Within an hour from this they must be gone,
With young Prince Aymon, through the Rada Pass.
I'll follow you, Mignonné, very soon,
To bring you back again. Farewell! farewell!

* * * * * *

I was a woman, now I am a queen;
So, father, tell me freely, what is this?"

"The Governor of Shiraz waits below."

"I knew it—oh prophetic fear! Speak on."

"The courts are filled with soldiers."

"Oh, alas,
My children! Blessed Mother, let me pray
For those poor children: Mother, keep them safe!
So I'm a prisoner?"

"Yea, even so."

"I have been one these six long months and more;
Watched every step, as you too truly know.
And now the mask is thrown aside. 'Tis well.
Go, pray thee, father, ask that haughty Bey
His lord's commands, and why his ribald band
Do fill my courts in this unwished array.
Say, if a friendly errand bring him here,
He shall be welcome to our friendly board;

If not, then say that in an hour from this,
I will receive him in the audience hall."

He was a prince of Georgia's royal line,
The Patriarch Sothemus; like his race,
By nature moulded for a warrior,
Although a priest by custom of his house,
Which kept the Patriarchate to its sons.
A politician full of simple craft,
That circumvented no one but himself,
He went his way with diplomatic hopes,
That broke about his big, indignant heart,
Like little ripples on a mountain lake.
He looked as if his flowing robe concealed
A coat of silver mail; as if his hand
Forgot at times the churchman's peaceful staff
Was not a sword: for so his stately head
Humility with proud submission wore,
Obedient to a duty. Fear and love
In his right loyal breast sat guardians round
The princess; and disarmed his haughty soul
Of its defiant pride, that would have spurned
Submission like disgrace. And thus he played
The politician without proper wile;

The casuist with simple arguments;
The priest with something of his country's ways,
With pious reverence for forms and words,
And greater faith in relics and in saints
Than in the eternal promises of God.
His counsels were more politic than wise.
So he returned from that rude Persian Bey,
To use his hopeless argument once more
With Kelavane, who watched among the trees
The flight of sweet Mignonne and the babes.

"Well, father, what reply vouchsafes this lord?"

"The same, my daughter. He will wait an hour,—
The last that he will ever wait on thee,
Unless you give submission absolute:
If not, then force will do what counsel fails."

"There was a time—or all our annals lie—
When Georgian blood would not have brooked this scorn;
But that is past, and we are women all!"

"Nay, dearest daughter, by the throne of heaven,

Say but the word, and not one Persian there
Shall leave your courts alive! 'Tis not for me
To talk of bloodshed, or to stir up war:
But I will rouse your chieftains with a word,
And raise the banner of the bleeding church
Among your people; and in one last flame
Fire all the nation to avenge its wrong,
And perish an example to all time.
To-day our triumph would be fairly won:
To-morrow!—well, what recks it? Say the word!"

"Nay, father, pardon me! Ah, no! ah, no!
No hearth shall be made desolate for me.
I know too well our utter helplessness
Against the Persian. 'Forgive me, father;
'Tis I, a woman, where a man should be—
The image of my country, and its fate!
God help me! what am I to rule a land,
An open frontier, and a conquered race?
A ruler but in name—a subject prince
Set o'er a Persian province, nothing more.
The honourable heirdom of my house
Is changed to servitude, and linked with shame.

The poorest peasant on yon mountain side,
Who lives on scou and millet, and whose goats
Dance in the sunshine, is a prince to me.
He may at will go up and down the land,
And worship God according to his faith:
Not so with me, a princess of a line
Coeval with the very Persian throne,
I cannot even yield my birthright up!"

"No need, dear daughter; neither thou nor thine
Need suffer, if thou wilt take counsel now."

Oh, counsel! father, we have counsell'd long."
I know kings kill not where they can enslave."

"Once more bethink thee, daughter, this once more.
No words, no outward form, no yea or nay,
Can blot the sacred faith from out thy soul;
Can turn the Lord of Nazareth into him
Of Mecca, the apostate; or unwash
Thy brow from all the sacred water
That these poor hands did lave on thy young face;
Or take the cross, by our great Father blest,
Out of the worship of a heart unchanged.

For oh, my daughter, princes of the earth,
When sore beset by their poor peoples' needs,
Must think of sufferings that they may prevent,
And hold their conscience 'twixt the world and God—
Acting as princes, not as simple men,
With politic regard to public good.
No selfish pleasure, no ambitious hope,
Earthly aggrandisement or renown
Is thine, in this grand compromise of creeds—
Not even to preserve thyself from woe,
Which broods before thee, dark, inevitable;
But for thy nation, which will suffer wrong,
And for thy kindred, who will share thy fate:
All, all for others, nothing for thyself;
A public policy, for noble ends.
Bethink thee well, my child, 'tis but a word,
A morning visit to the private mosque,
As was thy father's fashion—nothing more;
And give thy secret hours to Christian prayer,
And sacred meditations of the church.
'Twill amply satisfy the Persian king,
And thou wilt save thy people from the sword;
And live with all thy children round thy knee,
In love and reverence: while the holy church

Will pardon, and accept the sacrifice,
So pure, so upright, for so great an end."

"My father's brother, and the church's head,
I know thou art a faithful counsellor;
But not for me these politics of faith.
I am not wise as thou. I do not know
What compromise of holy truth is right,
And what is damnable. I do not know
Where public policy and God's own word
May safely give and take. But this I know,
According to the light within my soul
That guides my footsteps, there is nought for me
But open candour with eternal truths.
Come death, come life, come woe, in its worst shape,
To me and mine, more precious far than life,
I cannot seek a subterfuge like this;
I dare not, cannot, lie before the Lord!"

"No lie, dear daughter; but a form of words,
A politic convention—nothing more;
A wise self-sacrifice befitting kings."

"It may be woman's weakness; but this thing

Is not within the compass of my will,
Even were my reason fairly satisfied.
I could not give my truth away, and live.
I could not say there is no light in heaven,
And fail to see amid that blessed light,
Writ on each speck of all the firmament,
The words, 'Thou liest!'"

"Yea, and is it so?"

"Yea, even so!"

"Heaven help thee: thou art lost!"

"So be it."

"Oh, by all the blessed saints,
By thy dear father's bones, thy mother's love,
Thy husband's name, thy people's happiness,
Thy children's life and honour, let me pray,
An old man on his knees, the Patriarch
Of this poor land, oh, let me supplicate,
With tears and sorrow welling round my grave,
That you will think of this poor argument

With more a prince's, than a woman's, mind.
One little evil for a mighty good!
I pray thee, daughter! Oh, I know thy fate!
I know this iron Abbas, who has slain
His noble son in some unholy mood;
And would his very sire have crucified,
Had he but baulked his will; and thrown his bones
Among the city dogs, if he but knocked
His foot against his silent sepulchre."

"Alas! and woe is me! the hapless day
That raised me up to this unholy seat,
Whereon I must renounce the God of love,
Or bring new sorrow on this suffering land,
Which I would die for with a mother's joy.
'Tis vain, dear father, do not press me more;
But rather learn if those dear little ones
Be safely through the vineyard, to the wood,
Where Aymon lieth waiting. Go! oh, go!"

"Alas! I go—more woman far than thou."

"Now I will meet the Persian! Help me, God!"

VI.

TRUTH AND POWER.

The princess sat within her ancient hall,
Wherein the warlike chieftains of her race
Had met in council and in festival,
'Mid trophies of the battle and the chase;
A simple, rude, old chamber, dim and low,
With bows and matchlocks, swords, and flags, and spears,
Hung round in many a formidable row,
The calm memorials of other years.
The pale-faced princess sat in that dim room,
Serenely fair; while standing by her side
Were stern old chiefs, in whom their country's doom
Had humbled into hate their patriot pride.
The Persian Satrap, entering rude and bold,
Came up the chamber with a careless tramp,
While laughing to his brown-faced Beys he told

Some coarse campaigning story of the camp.
With short obeisance, and disdainful look,
He said, "I bear once more my lord's commands
To bring him thy submission. He will brook
No disobedience at a subject's hands."

"'Tis well that thou shouldst cease to mock
With empty forms a queen like me,
Thou seekest not thy thoughts to cloak
With any grace of courtesy.
I've told thee thrice what I will do,
With all my heart right well content!
What I dare not! Then why renew
This unavailing argument?
Will no one take this place of mine,
And win the King's consent? For me,
I'll give the heirdom of my line,
To be a peasant poor and free."

"Obey the gracious Shah," the Satrap said,
"As all your wiser fathers have obeyed."

"Nay, I will give my throne, my all;
And, of this greatness disarrayed,

Will triumph in my fall;
Will pray as never woman prayed,
For him who took my throne away,
And left me pure my simple faith—
The only thing that I can call
Truly mine own in life or death,
That cannot perish or decay."

"The Shah commands. I know no foolish plea,
That any perverse fanatic may feign,
But mighty Abbas holds it fairly free
To vaunt with ribald tongue its right to reign
Among the wayward mob: but as for those
Whose place of royal state is nearer heaven,
To such the careless boons, that Abbas throws
Like bones to hungry dogs, were never given.
'Tis all unworthy of a prince's fame,
An outrage on the holy Prophet's name,
A mockery, and a lie. Shall it be said,
That King and Prophet both are disobeyed?"

"I'll give what lasts, but while I live
My faith is not mine own to give;
The tribute to a mightier Lord,
I cannot give it with a word."

"Thy Lord is not like my lord, nor thy faith
Like mine—to save, to bless, to glorify,
A Jewish demagogue, who at his death
Bequeathed his followers this foolish lie,
That thou dost call a creed. But, by my sword,
I'll sweep them from beneath the Georgian sky!"

"The hand of God is over them and me."

"My hand is nearest, and my steel the best."

"Now, scorn on thee; for that unholy jest
Makes thee unfit to stand within my hall!
This answer bear from me to Persia's king:
That I in reverence humbly bend the knee,
And that my people will meet tribute bring
To him, as lord and master of the land;
That all my wealth and power, though truly small,
Are only mine in trust, at his command;
All earthly state I gladly will forego,
And give him all things that God doth not claim.
So, pray thee, Persian, tell thy master so."

"These are his own already! Once for all,
I tell thee to thy face, thou wilt obey;

Though thou and thine, and all the world, say Nay;
And kneel to me in anguish and in shame,
For thy proud scorn, a suppliant criminal.
Ho! treachery!"

"Stand back, my lords!"

"Without there, ho!"

"For shame! put up your swords.
What though this Satrap be a little rude,
He's but a messenger, whose head may be,
In surety of his zealous servitude,
The stake against his triumph over me.
You see 'twas but a gleam of wrath at most,
By you provoked, my lord: you need not call
Your soldiers in the courts to leave their post;
You're very safe within my father's hall."

"Safe! By the Prophet's beard, your chiefs are bold,
To flutter up their feathers to my face,
Ere they be plucked like pullets for the spit;
Men who their very flesh and blood have sold
Without a blush, to palliate disgrace,—

Whose daughters in our Persian harems sit,
Bought over head at twenty crowns apiece,—
To touch their hilts to me! And men like these—
Ha, this again!"

"My lords! my lords, forbear!
For heaven's sweet sake! Sir, is your mission told?"

"It is. Have I my answer? I came here
With thee no heathen argument to hold,
To brook no insult from a subject land,
Whose weakness is its safety; but to take
Thy full submission to my lord's command:
And what I cannot bend, I still can break."

"Go: tell thy mighty monarch I am weak,
But that my blessed trust will make me strong;
That all the tortures which thy tongue could speak,
By God's good grace, shall no compliance wring:
For He will keep me well against this wrong,
And save my soul from the unholy thing.
No hope, no fear, no honour, and no shame,
Can me in this propitiate or appal.
I'll serve thy king, revere his mighty name;
But not for him forsake the King of all,

Make faith a curse, and truth a lie,
And shame my soul before the Lord,
And, in my shallow sophistry,
Stand God-condemned, and self-abhorred.
No, Persian! no!
Though Iran's race, and Islam's creed,
Have thrown a shadow o'er the land,
And lie upon our breasts like lead,
I would not raise one rebel hand
'Gainst him whose power oppresses so,
For power and life are little things:
But there's a treasure in the soul,
A tribute to the King of kings,
O'er which thy king has no control.
And here, where first the falling flood
Disclosed the bounteous land below,
And made my mountain wilderness
The cradle of the human race,
Though I should stand where Noah stood,
With all his kingdom for the prize
Of an apostate's crown of lies,
That pomp of gilded servitude
I would not purchase so."

She waved her hand in pensive stateliness,
That noble princess, calmly beautiful,
That beauteous daughter of a beauteous race,
Veiled like her sorrow; and she left the hall,
And sat her down where late her children twain,
And fair Mignonne, sat around her feet,
And seemed to kiss them o'er and o'er again,
With lips half fevered for their kisses sweet.

"Now they are gone," she murmured, "they are gone;
In vain the Persian scouts ride round the hill;
They are away, and I am left alone.
Yet thou, O God of love, art with me still.
O Father, hear me in this hour of ill;
When all the bliss
That thou hast left me rises up to fill
My soul with weaknesses.
My little ones come armed against my heart,
With its own tenderness;
Each word a blow, each look a mortal dart,
That pierces me far more than any foe,
And fills me with distress.
Oh, give them strength, O Father! be to them
The father to the fatherless.

And thou, O Lord of glory, who didst call
The Hebrew children round thee, be to them
Their Saviour and their Lord.
And thou, O Mary, Mother, thou whose name
Is blessed among women, thou adored,
A mother in their hour of loneliness."

Alas! alas! how little did she deem
That all her loved ones were so near at hand:
Her mother's hope was but a transient gleam,
That died amid the darkness of the land.
Mignonne and the children, with their guard,
Were brought into the court, and through the crowd.
Young Aymon's plans the Persian spies had marred,
Before his charge could reach him in the wood.

"Ho! bring the she-wolf's brood," the Satrap cried;
"The pretty princess too, bring all the three.
There's something new in this contemptuous pride,
When mighty Abbas speaks his will through me.
By Allah! I would tame her haughty scorn,
Were not her neck and mine in one tight cord;

But tender sucklings from their mother torn
Will touch her heart more sharply than a sword.
So here they are, shot on the wing! Ha! ha!
She thought to circumvent us! Come, sweet one.
A fairer mountain fawn I never saw:
Nay, do not turn away; we'll meet anon.
Go to your royal sister. Say that I,
Afraid she would be very sad alone,
Have brought you back to keep her company."

And so they entered while she knelt at prayer,
The sweet Mignonne, and the children twain.

"O God," she cried, "this is the worst to bear!
My poor, my helpless infants back again!
What have I done, O Lord? what have I done?
To bring the woes of all my race on me?"

And as they hung about her neck and wept,
Among their dewy cheeks she laid her face,
And love and sorrow silent watches kept
Beside the woeful joy of that embrace.

VII.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

The hills of shady Carthuell
Are glowing with the vine;
The pleasant sound of summer streams
Makes music in the air;
They cannot reach the cell,
Where hopeless captives pine—
And Kelavane is there.

The noblest of the noble, the truest of the true,
The fairest of the fair, and the flower of all her line!
Alas! the fate that fell so late, when hero hearts were few,
When o'er the blessed cross of God the golden crescents shine.

And still the noble river flows o'er many a rocky fall;
And still King Elburz's crest of snows is tow'ring over all;
The thunders of the avalanche the ancient silence rend,
Among the steeps of Ararat and dreary Demavend;
And still in all its loveliness the ancient land appears;
And still the old Iberian race its ancient beauty wears.
But faithless heart and feeble hand have ta'en the place of those,
Who held of old the frontier land so nobly and so well;
Who held of old the frontier land against a world of foes,
From Arbilan and Erivan, and o'er the steppes of Bell.
And all the ancient spirit seemed to linger, ere it fled,
In that soft heart, whose gentler part was blighted ere its prime;
And all the ancient daring of the old heroic dead,
And all the fervour of a faith that bless'd a better time.
The rushing of the rocky Kur she hears through all the night,
The murmur of the market-place begins with morning light.
But day nor night no friendly voice is heard within her room,
But day nor night no friendly sight breaks through its weary gloom.

She bears her woman's sorrow, with all an angel's peace,
Though hopeless of the morrow, and despairing of release.
They took her to a cavern deep, beneath the castle hoar,
Where slimy creatures creep, and creep, o'er roof, and wall, and floor,
And rushing waters welter near, and ooze, and drip, and run;
A dank old cavern dark and drear, that never saw the sun;
A place where Hope had never been, where Fear had her abode;
And there they left the captive queen, alone—alone with God.
Alone! her heart was filled with peace, her soul was filled with light,
And in her holy fearlessness she prayed, the long, dark night.
The loathsome creatures crept about, the waters drip'd and ran,
The welt'ring river moan'd without, as moans a dying man.
But in her holy fearlessness, in that unsightly cave,
She knew that there was One to bless, that there was One to save.

But through the solemn depths of night a strain of
music rose;
Oh could such tones of sweet delight be mockery of
her woes?
They sang the songs of Paradise, as Moslem dreams
unfold,
Its soft and dreamy loveliness, its bliss of bliss untold;
Where waters of forgetfulness o'er beds of crystal flow,
Where by the Prophet's dwelling-place the Tree of
Bliss doth blow;
Where fountains flow with mellevere, and rivers run
with wine;
By banks of blossoms ever fair, where black-eyed maids
recline;
Where youth is never fading, and where love is ever new,
Their purple radiance shedding over hearts for ever
true;
Where hope brings its fulfilling, as the sun doth bring
the day;
Where angels' songs are swelling through the flowery
woods alway;
Where, in their crystal palaces, that through the gardens
shine,
They drink from diamond chalices the riches of the vine.

Though sweet the strain as silken sleep, that comes to
rock the weary eye,
And though around her reptiles creep, and though her
life was one long sigh,
She bade the tempting voice depart, and sing where it
might welcome be;
No weakness touched her constant heart, no weaker
wish than to be free.

"Ah me!" she said, "my God and Lord be with
my little ones this night;
Be with my people, make thy word their bread of life,
their household light,
Their daily counsel and their trust; for they are blind,
and do not see
What peace, what strength, what bliss, is lost to those
who do not follow thee!
And give me strength, O Father, where I want it
most, in faith and deed,
That I may know that thou art here, to aid me in my
hour of need.
Lift me above mine earthly love, that wakens murmurs
in my heart
With thy behests; for I am weak, and filled with heavy
woe, to part

From all I love; in stranger lands to leave them, and
be all forlorn;
To leave my trust in other hands, and sit at home
alone and mourn!
Teach me to know how truly thou dost bring the pur-
pose of thy will
Unto perfection, even through our suffering and our
seeming ill.
And those by whom thy will is wrought in me and
mine, in these dark days,
Forgive them, for they have not sought my wrong by
any treacherous ways;
But walking by their law of right, howbeit law of wrong
to me,
It may be justice in their sight, however hard their
cruelty.
Teach me, O Lord, to live or die a humble witness in
my place,
To that dread day on Calvary, the baptism of the
human race."

With morning dawn the chieftains came—with timid
murmurs came to pray
That she would hold the Persian's claim in such
respect, and so obey,

As that there should be small offence in compromising
creed and creed;
That she at peace her soul might cleanse of Moslem
word by Christian deed.
They were not apt in cunning words, nor deeply versed
in sophist lore,
They twitched their belts, and touched their swords,
and wistful watched the chamber door.

"Not so, my friends," the captive said; "dear friends,
you know my words are true;
You know that my resolve is made; you know how
vain it is to sue.
Go all your ways, and learn to dwell in open truth
with God and man;
For fearless truth will guide you well, and cunning
falsehoods never can.
They said, "The land will come to woe." "Alas!" she
said, "God's help is all
That I can look for. Well I know, that were I from
his faith to fall,
Apostate to myself and heaven, a harder curse, a
darker fate,
Would crush a land that fear had driven to crouch,
and lie, 'twixt fear and hate.

Know ye 'tis thus that slaves are made? know ye 'tis thus that tyrants grow,
Like mushrooms, by corruption bred from out the rotten mass below?
Know ye 'tis fear that forges chains? know ye that truth is always brave,
Assured, when nothing else remains, of peace and honour in the grave?
Would ye be free? be brave, and true, to speak, to suffer, and to die;
For God will give a land its due. A noble nation's destiny
Is like a good man's life to Him, girt round by faithful promises,
That neither distant are, nor dim; but witness bear from race to race.
A noble land is never lost; for its nobility is gone
Before a conqueror can boast that he has placed his foot thereon.
Its truth is dead, its holy faith, its humbler people trodden down;
And all the honour of its death, the memory of its old renown,

The simple truth of steadfast hearts, doth awe the most
audacious kings,
To honest hands new power imparts, and to their cause
new blessing brings.
If death be theirs, they freely die, their homes to shield,
their land to save;
And where the faithful fathers lie, their children
triumph o'er their grave.
No recreant land, no suppliant race, shall ever find
excuse in me;
Go, look your actions in the face, and, if you blush not,
then be free."

VIII.

THE CRADLE LAND.

The crown that Cyrus gave to Lar,[11]
A prince in his Assyrian war,
Was nobly worn by sire and son,
Since fell the walls of Babylon;
Till Abbas, envious of its fame,
Laid hands upon the diadem.
But older still the badge of power,
That one Circassian chieftain wore;
The selfsame line, that held the place,
When earth was one wild wilderness,
Preserve their father's first abode.
There foot of stranger never trod;
There hills on hills majestic rise
In leafy glory to the skies,

With cedars old, and towering pine,
And mighty oak, and scrambling vine :
There raging torrents sweep and surge,
Through woody deeps, from gorge to gorge ;
And on the towers, that guard them well,
The eagle is their sentinel.
Beyond this iron bulwark lies
The secret mountain paradise.
The hills are speckled o'er with sheep,
With herds of goats on every steep ;
And every vale is rich with kine :
O'er every homestead creeps the vine.
The olive gives its rich increase,
The fig-tree spreads its leaves in peace,
The waving fields of yellow grain
Proclaim the plenty of the plain.
The Ingour rolls its golden sand
Down from the maiden mountain land,
The land from whence the men of old
Received, they say, their ancient gold.[12]
But that its sons might ever be
A people incorrupt and free,
Its treasures tempt no human eye,
Its ancient mines forgotten lie ;

The forest waves, the grass is green,
O'er veins of gold that sleep unseen.
Such was young Aymon's dwelling-place,
The eyrie of the eagle race.
And sad at heart that night he rode,
The paths which stranger never trod,
By hill, and wood, and vale, and scaur,
The steed that never knew the spur.
And, now and then, a cry of woe
Came wailing all the forest through;
Then mirth, that seemed the grief to mock,
Was echoed round from rock to rock.
A torch within a hand was seen,
Held o'er the fathomless ravine.
And now he heard the sullen champ
Of horses in some neighbouring camp.
And now the cry of battle rose,
The shout of friends, the shout of foes,
The clash of arms. But all in vain,
Young Aymon never drew his rein.
A chief in armour barred his path,
With bare white blade and eyes of wrath:
One swoop, one bound, and,—fall who might,—
As fleetly as the mountain Kur,

The steed that never knew the spur,
Went like an arrow through the night.

Anon he heard a voice that prayed,
In accents low, love-sweet, for aid,—
To lead her to her father's gate,
A poor young virgin, desolate.
The moonlight showed the maiden fair,
Her radiance of dishevelled hair,
Her slender form, her tender grace,
The beauty of her down-cast face;
And with a snow-white hand she led
Her snow-white palfrey by the head.

"Mount, lady, then, and follow me,
I may not turn to follow thee;
My holy errand cannot wait,
Even for a maiden desolate.
But I will guard you from distress,
And guide you through the wilderness."
So, quick of hand, and airy light,
She mounted on her palfrey white.
And on they rode, that youthful twain;
But neither bridle drew again,

And neither youth nor maiden spoke,
Till, stumbling on the narrow rock,
The palfrey fell. The youth looked round,
And saw the maiden on the ground.
Then wildly darting to her side,
"Help, holy Queen of heaven!" he cried:
When, lo! the words were scarcely spoken,
Before the demon spell was broken;
And maid and palfrey in a trice
Went hissing down the precipice.

Aghast, yet fearless, stood the youth,
His brave heart braver for the truth,
That he had learnt from Kelavane.
The lightning clove the black abyss,
That redden'd fierce and fathomless,
And showed alive with writhing forms,
A seething cataract of storms.
The raging torrent, swollen with rain,
Went moaning on with swell and surge,
From rock to rock, from gorge to gorge;
The air seem'd filled with cries of pain,
And, like a pack of famished wolves,
The storm came howling down the night;

But manly hearts, and brave resolves,
Can change the darkness into light.
One pat upon the silken mane,
And, like an arrow as before,
The steed that never knew the spur,
Went bravely through the night again.

And thus through many a fearful way,
He sleepless rode by night and day:
And burst among the chiefs, and said,
How Georgia's queen was captive made;
And after all his efforts vain,
Mignonnè and the children twain.
Then far and wide the message flies,
From every glen the warrior hies;
And through the forest road they ride,
The prince and peasant side by side,
Towards the Sacred Grove,[13] to know
Where points the sword, where lies the foe.

There stood the cedars that had seen
The fathers of the land convene,
Since first they passed the mountains grey,
That Greek Iskender held at bay.

The grove with gifts was hung around;
To every bough were chaplets bound;
The shreds of banners drooped below,
And sword, and shield, and spear, and bow,
And silver bridle, golden spur,
And plumed helm, and robe of fur;
And many a trophy told the son,
The deeds that his brave sire had done.
In every tree a spirit dwelt,
Which for some warrior's fortunes felt,—
A remnant of the Druid years,
That lingered with the mountaineers,
And tinged through their secluded clime,
The little change that came with time.
They deemed the voices of the night
Were spirit tongues, that spake to men:
'Twas for the breast to judge aright,
The words that came from hill and glen,
From forest dark and mountain steep,
And from the ravine's yawning deep,
Where foot of man hath never been,
Where eye of man hath never seen,
The birthplace of the mountain floods,
The mysteries of the solitudes.

'Twas part of fear, and part of faith,
A custom touching life and death.

And there, in that time-honoured place,
Were met the chieftains of their race.
Beneath the patriarchal oak,
That seemed coeval with the rock,
The snow-white mountain sires were set;
While round them stalwart warriors met,
From every corner come to hear
The words of men whom all revere,
And take their counsel and command,
As truth and law through all the land.
Beneath the forest, spreading green,
All round about the youth were seen,
All emulous of noble deeds,
With gleaming arms, and glossy steeds,
That flash where sunbeams pierce the leaves,
Like western rays in summer eves.
They dart about with warlike glee,
Beneath the low-boughed cedar-tree;
Through clumps of wood and thickest spray,
Where one could scarcely see the way.

Then riding o'er the open ground,
They rush, they flash, all round and round:
They dart like light; then midway course
They halt like statues, man and horse.
They ride, they run, now all afoot;
Now all are flat aground, and mute;
And now to breast, and saddle brace
The riders cling, nor slacks the pace.
And now they fall, and, quick as thought,
Each horse stands still, upon the spot,
Until his master mounts again,
Then darts like lightning o'er the plain.

Young Aymon told his mournful tale,
In few, sad words he told it well.
Few words were spoken, but they told
Of speedy counsel, and of bold;
Five hundred men within the hour.
Five times five hundred men, and more,
Were ready at a moment's call,
Each wistful where the lot might fall.

The patriarch struck the Sacred Oak:
"Bear witness," said he, "to this stroke,

Thou Tree, that hast the counsels heard
Of all our fathers; what they dared,
Dare we:" and slowly left the spot;
And every chief the Oak-Tree smote;
And said, "Bear witness!" and that day
Five hundred warriors sought the fray,
As brave as ever saddle strode;
And at their head young Aymon rode,
In silver mail and robe of fur,
The steed that never knew the spur.
Such was that steed, that I would paint
Her picture for a monument.

A coal black mare without a speck,
Save on her brow one starry fleck;
Her race was of the winged feet
Of silken Sholaklia the fleet.
Her head was thin, her nostrils wide,
Her dark eyes flashed with fiery pride,
Yet soft and liquid, not the less,
To tell her native gentleness.
Her chest was broad, her shoulders free,
For swiftness and for symmetry.

Her gleaming neck with streaming mane—
So noble all her fine fore-train—
Rose straight as maiden's from her breast,
And like a swan's, its curving crest.
With watchful ears, erect and small,
That knew her master's softest call;
With stately gait, and easy grace;
A face that look'd man in the face;
Her back was straight, her limbs were long,
With instep high, and pasterns strong,
In small round hoofs, like pillars set,
As hard as steel, as bright as jet.
The Alpine he-goat's foot had she;
The household dog's docility;
The beauty of the Arab breed;
The courage of the Tartar steed;
And, like a banner in the gale,
Streamed far behind her silken tail.

She had been trained, as others are
Through all that land, for peace or war:
O'er broken ground, blindfolded led,
O'er rock, and rugged water bed,

O'er narrow ledge, and woody steep,
Through foaming torrents rolling deep;
And taught to trust their master's voice,
And in its surety to rejoice.
They stoop to meet the child's caress,
Returning it with gentleness;
And round the homesteads every day
The horses share the children's play;
Or wild in herds through forests roam,
And pasture many a league from home;
Nor grudge to leave their mates again,
To bear the yoke of bit and rein.
They love their masters with a love
That weeks and months of hardship prove.
His pleasure and his pains they share,
The hardest couch, the coarsest fare.
They love like him the headlong chase,
Like him they love the fleetest race,
Like him with exultation dash
Into the battle's deadliest crash,
And charge through fire, and steel, and death,
With flashing eye, and flaming breath.
For him the toils of peace they bear,
A calm, contented, labourer;

And at the furrow and the mill
Yield up to him their native will;
And teach a truth the world to guide,
How kindness conquers strength and pride.

Five hundred men, five hundred steeds,
With hearts that throbbed for gallant deeds,
All in their gayest war array,
Rush fleetly through the forest way;
And through the pathless mountain gorge,
Without a spur their speed to urge;
And through the rivers, roaring wide,
They swim abreast in crested pride.
They skim along the fearful steep,
Where watchful eagles safely sleep—
A ledge so narrow, and so high,
That but to stumble is to die.
In one black line they seem to glide,
Like ravens past the mountain side;
While far below the torrents roar,
Five hundred sheer down feet and more.
At night they camp beneath the trees,
Nor man nor horse is hard to please.

In two long lines the steeds are bound,
Their hinder feet fast to the ground;
While at their heads the warriors share
Their scou and millet, simple fare.

Before the dawn the turtle dove
Coos out its tender note of love,
The forest is alive with birds,
And tinkling bells from browsing herds;
The sheep upon the mountain bleat,
The shaggy goat and ibex fleet,
Are up, and feeding ere the sun
His daily travail has begun;
The fisher meets him at the stream,
The husbandman beside his team,
The woodman greets him through the pines,
The vintager among his vines.
And ere the sun had lit the land,
Young Aymon led his mountain band,
By rugged hill and valley deep,
Down rocky pathway, rough and steep;
Through rivers foaming, fleet, and hoarse,
And many a winter watercourse.

At length a hiding-place they sought,
Two leagues from Teflis, where they lay,
Until the scouts the tidings brought,
Where Persia's vulture kept his prey

IX.

FEAR AND HOPE.

Oh, parting! were there no sweet hope
Of times when we shall part no more—
Oh, parting! were the soul's bright scope
All bounded by this earthly shore,
And did the lost, the loved ones go
For ever from our longing love—
Oh, parting, were its saddest throe
Not sweetly tempered from above—
Would leave creation all a waste,
To dust and ashes turn our hearts,
Make life a long despair at best,
To which no light new hope imparts,
To which there comes no promised springs,
To which no summer comes again,

To which no fruitful autumn brings
The promise of the years of pain.
But weariness upon the eye,
And woefulness within the breast—
A barren earth, a brazen sky,
A longing for the long, last rest.
Oh, parting! how the mourner's heart
Doth with its fulness overflow,
To think that though the loved depart,
Love hath its home where they do go;
That we can weep and dry our tears,
And work among our fellow men,
And bring to cheer the passing years,
The hope that we shall meet again.

So wept, so hoped, the captive fair,
In Teflis' castle, Kelavane;
And with her, in her sorrow there,
Mignonnè and the children twain.
They sat within a bare, dim room,
All bound in one long, sad, embrace—
A light eternal in that gloom,
A hope amid the hopelessness.

They murmured low, for near, oh, near,
Were all the hearts that felt as one;
And near, oh, near, was every ear,
That made each loving lip its own.
The sinking sun, with one bright ray,
Touched gently every tearful face,
As if the last soft light of day
Were given to comfort their distress.

"We cannot leave thee, mother dear!"
The children whispered, one by one;
"We cannot leave thee, mother dear!"
They sobbed, in love's forlorn tone.
"Where can we go when thou art not?
What can we do when thou art gone?
Oh, what will be our weary lot,
When we are parted, and alone?
Thou sayest that other lands there be,
Which Persian princes come not near—
Oh, take us there along with thee!
Oh, do not leave us, mother dear!"

Mignonnè wept, but could not speak.
The Princess said, "'Twill all be well!"

Mignonnè wept in silence, sick
With strange, sad, fears she could not tell.
They knew the parting hour was near;
Death waited at the chamber door;
Yet low, sweet, words, of loving cheer,
The princess murmured o'er and o'er.

"My sweet Mignonnè, do not cry;
For what is death, that we should mourn
The loved as lost, or fear to die?
'Tis but the hero's safe return
From patriot fields in victory;
The eve of labour's Sabbath rest;
The vigil of that feast on high,
When we shall mingle with the blest.
Then, sweet Mignonnè, do not cry.
There is a bliss in going home,
Though sad and weary be the road;
Sweet voices from the distance come,
And welcome cheers the dear abode.
Then never grieve that we must die,—
'Tis going home to God.
Then, sweet Mignonnè, do not cry,

Though I may leave you all alone,
'Tis only going on before.
And do not grieve when I am gone,
But love each other more and more.
Look trustful up to yonder sky;
Though blackening tempests o'er us roll,
The glorious sun is still on high,
The hand of God is over all:
Then, little children, do not cry."

A heavy step came to the door:
The Satrap entered, stern and rude.
"Enough of this," he cried, "and more.
Is thy proud spirit unsubdued?
I gave you till this hour; the light
Has died behind Mount Elburz's crown.
Now answer, yea; or on thy sight
Shall never sun again go down!"

"Alas, my loved ones! oh, this woe!
My lord, my lord, this is not well,
To terrify my children so,
And drench with blood our last farewell!"

"Oh, mercy, mercy—oh, my lord!"
The sweet Mignonné, kneeling, cried;
"Oh, mercy, mercy—oh, my lord!"
Lisped out the children by her side.

"Now pleadest thou, sweet one?" said he;
"Then she shall live, and for thy sake.
And thou shalt her fair hostage be,
Till she her recantation make."
And, bending o'er the maiden wan,
He spoke in whisper'd accents bland.
What! he, the blood-stained Kouli Khan,
To dare to touch Mignonné's hand!

Now changed the captive pale and meek,
As face, to face, with him she stood,
While rushing o'er her pallid cheek,
Came back the brave Iberian blood,
In blushing beauty to the skin,
All from the noble heart within.

"Unmanly as thou'rt merciless!
The boon, too base for woman's scorn,
I throw with horror in thy face.
Alas! I was to suffering born,

But never, never to disgrace.
Be but a man for once: let these
Go freely forth, and let me die!
And I will bless thee on my knees,
And deem it no calamity."

"Ha! ha!" the Persian said, "thou'rt bold
To mock, alike, at hope, and fear.
And must you yet again be told
That Kouli Khan is master here?
Without there, ho!" Three mutes appear.
"Take these away! This night they leave
For Persia, as hostages,
Till you our holy faith receive,
Submissive to our master's grace."

"One moment—oh!"

"Not one—not one!"

Mignonnè and the children twain
Knelt at his feet: a heart of stone
Could not have seen them kneel in vain.

"I'll cheer thy grief myself," he said,
"Sweet princess!" with an outstretched arm.
"Nay, nay, fair one, be not afraid;
Circassian maids feel no alarm
Of Persian lords. We Persians owe
Our beauty to Circassian blood,
They say. This very night you go,
Unless your sister change her mood.
What sayest thou, lady?"

"Oh, my God!"

"Tush! still that cant."

"My lord, my lord!
Thou hast no mercy! I am bowed
To earth with sorrow; let thy sword
Smite me, or torture me with fire,
Or keep me captive all my weary years,
Or let me even on the rack expire,
I will not trouble you with many tears;
But spare me these, my heart's dear life, and more;
My three sweet darlings—spare me, spare me these!
And I, who never knelt to man before,
I do beseech thee humbly on my knees."

"Where is thy scorn, and where thy pride?
Thy taunts, thy haughty bearing, now?
Ha! ha! the moollah by thy side
Will hear thy recantation vow."

"Oh, triumph on!"

"What shout is that?
To arms!"

"My lord, the walls are lost!
The foe came on us while we sat
At supper, and the fosse they cross'd,
Before we knew."

"Oh, slave accurst!
Take these away—and keep, or slay.
Then let those devils dare their worst;
The guns will bring us help straightway."

From narrow casements here and there,
And from the narrow courts beneath,
Darts out the matchlock's long red glare—
The sulphurous atmosphere of death.

With rush and crush, and shout and blow,
And clanging steel, and thundering gun,
Crash goes the oaken doors below;
The outer courts are lost and won.
Within the castle roars the fight,
Led on by one who knows it well.
Now streams the torch's murky light,
From room to room, and cell to cell;
And rush and crush, and shout and blow,
Are heard within, are heard without;
While all the dark old castle through
The smoky torches rush about,
Till on Mignonné flashed the glare—
Mignonné and the children twain.
In haste they bore them forth, but where
Was she, the Princess Kelavane?
They search, they shout. "Ho!" cries the guard,
"The army's on us from the camp!"
The bugle rings, one shout is heard,
A sudden rush, a long loud tramp,
And gone are all the gallant band.
Their steeds they reach, but scarcely when
The Persian horsemen are at hand,
And bar their path, two thousand men.

Ha! ha! the gallant mountaineer,
The mountain men, the mountain steeds;
One word, one rush, the way they clear,
And ride the Persians down like reeds.
One volley reddens all the night,
By laughter answered back again,
The victors, both in fight and flight,
Are riding scathless o'er the plain.

But, ah, alas! for Kelavane!
How mourned young Aymon for her fate!
How wept the loved ones desolate,
Mignonne and the children twain!

X.

THE FORM AND THE SOUL.

The sweet solemnities of simple prayer—
That blessed mystery of daily life!
The earth hath unseen altars everywhere,
To pacify with love the world of strife.
Out of the darkness comes a holy cry
Of children to their Father, all night long;
A cry for help goes up the silent sky—
A cry that love transforms into a song.
The tempest roars, but cannot ring it down;
The thunder stills it not; the ocean wild
May howl up through the heavens, it cannot drown
The simplest prayer that's breathed by a child.
Men walk among the ancient promises,
And know that God is on Mount Horeb still,
Although no prophet sees Him face to face,
Although no more He thunders from the hill.

The silence of the desert still is His;
The pilgrimage of sorrow, His dread hand
Doth guide through all the weary wilderness,
Betwixt old Egypt and the promised land.
The mother mourning by the bed of death,
The childless widow, and the orphan lone,
Cry all, "O Father!" and the ear of faith
Receives its answer from the eternal throne.
And still the cry goes up the silent night;
From out the trouble goes a prayer for peace;
And from the darkness goes a cry for light;
And from captivity for sweet release;
And from repentant lips, with pleading hoarse,
Rise hope's faint accents, broken with dismay;
And from the flaming bosom of remorse,
A cry for that sweet peace it threw away:
For heartfelt prayers have more than angels' wings.
And bruised souls there be, and men forlorn,
Who sit all night, and cry aloud with kings,
Who lay aside their golden crowns, and mourn
In one community of humble hearts,
O'er all the earth, where faithful men have trod,
In that grand unity which faith imparts,
The mystery of communion with God.

Thus filled with faithful love the princess knelt
In her poor chamber, breathing prayer and song,
In fervid thankfulness. The pain she felt
At that sad parting, which might be life-long,
Was lost in joy at their deliverance,—
At such a time, from such impending wrong,
Which nothing could avert but the offence
That for their sake had trembled on her tongue.
What hand had saved her children at the time
When madness parleyed with the apostate word,
When safety only seem'd to lie in crime,
The last the worst—denial of her Lord?
It seemed as if the clouds that overcast
Her life were gone, and let the sun shine down;
It seemed as if her perils all were past,
Her sorrows ended, and her days her own.

"Now I am free," she said, "to live or die;
To suffer whatsoe'er my God ordains.
O Father! let me praise thee joyfully
For this deliverance from the deadliest pains;
For thou didst save me in my deep distress
From more than mortal sin; and saving me,
Didst give me hope that my poor weaknesses,

My sin, my shame, my sorrow, might not be
Beyond forgiveness. I would pray to thee,
O blessed Father! for my little ones:
Bless them with thy sweet blessing, all the three,
For thine own sacred sake, and for thy Son's,
The holy One who died for them and me."

And when her prayer was ended, she beheld
Three black-robed Ethiopians standing near.
"Whence come ye?" said she, while she stood unveiled;
"Unmannerly and rude, what brought you here?"
They spoke not, but came forward; she arose,
In all her beauty and commanding mien.
"Go!" said she, and they stood with gloomy brows.
"Know ye not, fellows, that I am a queen?"
They stood irresolute; they dared not touch
That noblest daughter of the Iberian race,
Though lonely, friendless, and a captive—such
The awe inspired by her majestic grace.
A voice cried out, "Make haste!" She knew it well.
And in a moment she was borne away,
Through long dark passages; and in a cell,
Which never saw the blessed light of day,

The torches round the torture-chamber shone,
Where reign'd cold cruelty, as hard as stone.
Well might she shudder there; well might she pray
To heaven for mercy now; for man had none.

No eye had tears for her sad suffering there;
No ear of mercy heard her direful moan;
No voice of pity mingled with her prayer;
No friend could comfort her—save One alone,
In whom she trusted with that awful faith
That stands unshaken by the powers of hell,
Unmoved by suffering, unappalled by death,
Triumphant where all human strength would fail.
The near were far away in that sad hour,
The far away was near, and ever near:
She knew His griefs were infinitely more,
She knew that He would teach her all to bear.
The curtain falls, but not upon despair.

"This torture daily shall thy spirit wring,"
The Persian Satrap said; "take her away!"
And so they lifted her, a bruised thing,
And bore her bleeding to the light of day.
And thinking in her weakness to beguile
The fearless spirit that defied their strength,

The priests were sent, in hope to reconcile
Her conscience to apostasy at length.

Compassionate, and silken, in their speech,
They told her how the church would view her case,
That baptism kept her sure, within its reach;
And that to save her people from distress,
And Christians from the persecutor's sword,
She might submit, and be absolved from sin.

"St. Paul would be accursed from the Lord
For the salvation of his Hebrew kin,
He said; and how could such a fate be thine,
If for a sacred purpose thou shouldst yield
To Persia, call her Paynim creed divine,
Accept the Prophet whom her creed reveal'd?"
They said, "'Tis but one little word, and then
The church will straightway make it well again."

"I cannot, dare not, speak that little word!"
Replied the poor heart-broken Kelavane.

"Alas!" they said, "thy suffering people cry
Aloud in terror of the Persian might."

"Then I will teach my people how to die,
Since it must be!" and lifting up her eye,
With all the radiance of its former light,
In scorn upon the craven churchmen nigh,
"The coward has at best an empty creed,
Though he the holiest of symbols wear.
He doth not fear the blessed God indeed,
Whose faith is touched by any human fear;
His life, I tell you, is but one long lie,
Wherever life and faith can be disjoined;
His very prayers, that in the utterance die,
Are worse than those that wave on ev'ry wind
Upon the wolds of heathen Tartary."

They say, "The blessed church will bleed through thee:
Wouldst thou spread ruin through the church of God?"

"And comest thou thus," she said, "to speak to me,
Vain guides, misleading men, on life's great road?
What is thy church without its human hearts?
The marble fountain, whence no waters pour!
The temple, when the worshipper departs!
The sceptre, waved along a barren shore!
The statue of the man that is no more!

The shadow of a truth that is divine,
But cannot live in words! and ye adore
The symbol, like those countrymen of mine
Upon Mingrelian hills, who bow before
The distant cross, then wallow with the swine.
The purple princes of this church of thine,
May be the meek disciples of our Lord,
The lowly Nazarene: men much incline
Their minds to truths in kingly keeping stored.
But ye! are ye the teachers of his word?
What blest evangel bring ye to the land?
What solace do your empty forms afford,
Except through self-deception? Is your hand
Outstretched obedient to the sweet command
Of mercy? Are your footsteps in the ways
Of righteousness? Where mourners stand,
Amid the desolation of their days,
Are ye among them, breathing prayer and praise,
And hope through Him who died upon the tree?
And when the symbol of the faith ye raise,
Raise ye the hearts of those who bend the knee
Above the level of the outer sense?
Ye sell your forms of faith for recompence,
Yet give ye not the truth that maketh free,

The love that, flowing round the cross of God,
Is purified by his all blessed blood.
I know you well, and I have known you long;
False to your Faith, to Heaven, to man, and me;
A just reproach upon the heathen's tongue.
What church so holy, and what creed so true,
That could command respect when foes are strong,
For people like your flocks, or priests like you?
Go! go! I am too weak, in many ways
Too weak; but you do make me very wroth,
And very sad. I've mourn'd for many days,
My people's folly, and their priesthood's sloth,
That make the truth a mockery, and a shame,
A ruin of the better days of old,
Ere Christian faith had dwindled to a name,
And Christian hearts through all the land grown cold."

XI.

TRUTH AND LOVE.

Oh, sad familiarity with woe,
When earthly hope is dead; and at their source
The very founts of happiness are dry!
When life is but a longing to be gone,
A sleepless watcher in the lonely night,
Who listens to the cock-crow wearily,
And welcomes every streak of promised light
When pale-faced Sorrow, and her sister, Pain,
With brow of anguish, and round tears of blood,
Sit down on either side—take each a hand,
And gaze, and gaze, into the weary eyes,
And say, "Thou art our own, our darling one;
And never will we leave thee in the world.
We are not cruel where the heart is true,
As they do know who bear our presence well.
We carry crowns beneath our mantle fold;

And when we part, for ever, at the grave,
We leave a legacy of joy untold.
Thy days of suffering will soon be o'er,
For we have walked beside thee all these years,
To lead thee to perfection evermore."
Oh faith unspeakable, that saw them there,
Yet knew their chastisements were all of love;
Till even their dread forms grew almost fair,
As with a holy radiance from above.

So passed the years, with Sorrow and with Pain;
The torture-chamber the familiar place,
To that poor princess. Irons, cords, and fire,
The burning brazier, and the horrent rack,
Awaited for the victim every day.
Yet day and night were heard the songs of praise;
Yet night and day there was a presence sweet,
Of ministering angels by her side.

There came a pilgrim in a well-worn robe,
The sacred kircha, sanctified by time,
By patches purified from every trace
Of its original—a hallowed badge,[14]
The robe that raised the Sooffavean[15] throne;

And he who wore it, wore it worthily,
As proud of his poor garment as a king.
Men said, "That is the wise old Kalifa,[16]
Kaled, the Sooffee[17] of the holiest rank."
His life had been one martyrdom for years.
Long fasts and meditation, and his days
Apart from men in weary deserts spent,
Had cleansed him from the passions of the world.
And with his long white beard, and calm dark eyes,
He bowed before the captive Kelavane.

"Who art thou, father?" said a low sweet voice.

"I am the Sooffee, Kaled."

"Seek'st thou me?"

"Yea; Heaven hath sent me."

"And what Heaven doth send,
Is welcome here. Good Sooffee, speak thy mind."

"A message of the unity of God
Has been entrusted to His humblest servant."

"You have a creed, wise Kaled: so have I:
They differ. Let us speak of something else.
I'm very lonely here. There's little room,
And less companionship. Know'st thou thy king?"

"Great Abbas has held converse with his slave,
Most noble princess. But why art thou here?"

"Because I cannot lie away my soul,
To please great Abbas, and accept a creed,
Which, whatsoe'er it be to him and thee,
To me would be damnation; even as mine
Would be to thee, if with a lying heart,
Thou took'st it like a garment from a king."

"Oh creeds, creeds, creeds! thou art beyond mere creeds."

"Thou comest from King Abbas, not from heaven."

"The humblest of God's servants, I am come
To reason with the Princess Kelavane."

"'Tis very kind The way is rough and long,
And you are old."

"I heard of thee, and came.
I was commanded; but my lord's commands
Weighed less than thy great peril for thy faith."

"I thank thee; but my faith is like my soul,
Immortal."

"In the unity of God
All creeds are lost—thine, mine, the king's, and all.
The small diversities of such beliefs,
As rise in various times, and various men,
Must be with zealous sanctity maintained
By those, whose far-off converse with their God
Doth need interpretation, and a law.
But there are some, whose souls are filled with truth;
Who see the holiness ineffable;
The glory and the joy immutable;
The one eternal, all-pervading God:
Not here, not there; but one and all in one,
Embracing every creed, whose worshipper
Has felt his soul in harmony with Him."

"Alas, alas! the way to God for me
Is only through the sacrificial love
Of him, my Lord, who died that I might live."

"Yea, love and sacrifice! The faithful life
Is love and sacrifice, through all and all,
Each dying unto each, all nature round,
Like that Arabian bird whose death is joy.
The kingly life, spontaneous to the law,
Is not of any race or any creed;
But hath its grand examples over all.
If not! oh woe for all the ancient faiths!
If not! oh woe for all the ancient men!
Lo! in my Median land, since Noah first
Set up his altars on Armenian hills,
How many faiths have lived and died away!
The gods of Nimrod and Assyrian Baal
Had nobler temples than all Persia now.
There, Haran made his idols. Abram, there,
Brought back the knowledge of the living God.
Sabæan priests adored the host of heaven.
The captive Hebrews wept, and worshipped, there;
Yet left no monument,—save Daniel's tomb,
Amid the dust of Susa's palaces,
And Esther's in the dead Ecbatana.
There, Cyrus heard the message of the Lord,
From Israel's prophet, and set Israel free.
The gods of Greece which great Secunder brought,

Fell where he left them; and the Sacred Fire
That Alderbijan's prophet lit of old,
Has died upon the hills. The books of Zend,
Writ in the depths of Elburz's mystic cave,
Where dwelt of old the griffin nurse of Zall,
Are now no more the Persians' sacred guide.
The followers of the Nazarene have come,
And passed away to silence, and the west,
Before the Prophet and great Ali's word.
These, too, may pass before another faith,
That may embrace the sanctity of all.
Thus creed has followed creed four thousand years;
And have their generations, race on race,
Gone down to Eblis; cursed root and branch,
Save such as held one sanctifying faith?
And have their faint attempts to find out God,
Been all transformed into a fiery curse,
Blackening, with desolation the renowns,
Of ancient greatness, and the longing love,
And fear, of trembling nations towards heaven?
Ah, no, most noble princess; in the soul
Is fixed the everlasting seat of faith.
Creeds are but leading strings for common minds;
And every creed has some, whose nobler soul

Is fixed in holy harmony with God,
And is by holy contemplation filled
With his eternal essence. What of names?
God changes not: call him by any name,
He still is God—the one unchangeable.
To him will rise the anthems of the deep,
Of murmuring rivers, and of solemn woods;
To him the parched desert prays for rain;
The blossom robes the wilderness for him;
The sun, the moon, the glory of the stars,
Are gems that sparkle on his regal crown.
And in the vast diversities of men,
In times of peril, and when nations fear
The desolation of impending swords,
Oh bless'd is he, and far beyond the strife,
Who says within his soul, 'My God is God,'
Whate'er his name, whate'er his worship be,
Whatever altars burn to honour him,
Whatever intercessor pleads for man,
The Arab prophet, or the Nazarene."

"Good Sooffee, I shall ne'er be such an one;
My soul is not in harmony with God,
My heart is full of weakness; and my life,

Were it all perfect to a human eye,
Would be one imperfection, over all,
To Him, the Holy One. I have no hope,
Save through the love, and suffering, of my Lord:
Through him alone I see the Father's face;
By his dear light I see the mercy-seat;
By his good aid alone my worthlessness
Can be restored to harmony with Heaven.
Therefore in him I will for ever trust,
And glorify his name, even unto death."

"Thy soul is thus in harmony with him;
He is thy God; whom thou dost so exalt
Unto the throne of thrones, arrayed in all
The heavenly majesty. Yet God himself
Regards his attributes, and not his name.
And be thy soul in harmony with these,
Reflecting, like a lake, the face of heaven,
Thou worshippest the great Creator still.
A name! a rite! he careth not for these!
Nor for the whole lip-service of the world.
What Persian pilgrim, that to Mecca goes,
But bows his head before the Caliphs' tomb,
Yet curses both the Caliphs in his heart,

Who took the mantle from great Ali's sons?
Thus fashion we our lips to worldly power,
While our free hearts hold converse with the Lord.

"Thou art too tolerant of creeds for me;
Too tolerant, methinks, of falsehood too.
I do not judge thee, Sooffee; God alone
May judge the heart. But, truly, were I thee,
I would resolve one simple question first,
Before I took the measure of God's will:
What is a lie? The question's very plain."

"A lie, good princess, is a word of guile.
Thy Lord himself bade his disciples be
As serpents cunning, harmless as the dove;
Their cunning to elude the grasp of power,
While doing wrong to none, not even their foes.
When Abram said, 'This woman is my sister,'
'Twas politic evasion, nothing more.
And when the Hebrews overreached their lords,
Their God instructed them in their deceit.
The spirit ruleth all things, not the lips."

"Oh grievous misconception of the truth!

Oh deadly fallacy for one like thee!
Where lip, or life, or act belies the heart,
Rejects the conscience, and deceives the world,
That is a lie. Be it of cowardice,
Or yet for venal purposes of gain,
Of worldly riches, or of vain renown—
A lie, a lie, a cursed blot, a shame—
A thing I could not, would not dare to speak,
For all that earth could give, or man could name.
What are we, whether prince or peasant born,
If we have souls foresworn, and lips untrue?
Oh, Sooffee, bow thy grey hairs to the dust;
Pray heaven to teach thee first where truth begins,—
In harmonising life, and word, and heart,
In truly speaking what thy soul doth think,
And in thy seeming, seeming what thou art.
Alas! I am a poor weak woman here;
And thou art skilled in wisdom; but the Lord,
In whom I trust, hath said he would unfold
The truth to babes and sucklings, which he hid
From wise and learned men. 'Tis so with me;
My weakness he hath made my greatest strength,
By teaching me to trust in him alway,
With that great faith which casteth out all fear.

And didst thou know his love, there, thou would'st see
The dread embodiment of all thy lore,
In one great act, that conquered death and hell,
And made the very grave the gate of heaven;
Thou would'st kneel down, and worship God with me,
And think no more of life, or death, or pain,
Than of the changes of a summer day."

"Thou hast confused mine argument. 'Tis strange;
Thy faith is something purely of thine own,
And not of dialectical results,
Which men may reason on. 'Tis very strange;
No Moslem, dying for his Prophet's creed,
Hath thy calm confidence. His fiery zeal
Is roused by expectation—thine by love.
Yet much I fear it is a woman's creed:
A man must work his own way back to God."

"How, Sooffee, how? The law of holiness
Is best fulfilled by men of humble hearts,
Who see their boundless distance from their Lord.
How can they trust in poor imperfect deeds?
In purity, which is not of the earth?
In guilelessness, that every word gainsays?

In love, that flits abroad, like Noah's dove,
Without a resting-place? The perfect law
Is like a light, which makes each blemish plain,
And shows deformity in all our deeds,
Since imperfection is our heritage,
And sin the common legacy of man.
Who is there who, by search, can find out God?
Or, fallen from the early state of life,
Shall rise again above man's weaknesses,
And challenge justice, that doth call for death,
On all beneath the measure of the law?
Cry out, and bring them from the east, and west,
From north, and south, and say what human soul
Proclaims itself prepared to challenge truth,
To find out error in its earthly ways.
And shall Almighty Justice break its sword,
And balance little virtues with the law?
And, face to face, with all that perfect is,
Shall you and I stand forth and claim reward?
One spotless hand could break the seal of doom—
But One alone, immaculate as God.
And He, the Son, the Word, the Holy One,
To reconcile the mercy and the love
With the eternal righteousness of Heaven,

Assumed the form and nature of a man,
And died, that men might live through love, and faith,
And gratitude to him, for all his woes.
And, knowing this, good Sooffee, in my heart,
Say, would'st thou ask me to deny my Lord?
Like thy religion, his is of the soul;
All spiritual devotion to his will;
But, unlike thine, demands a life of truth:
For where it is, the outer life of man
Can little vary from the inner faith.
No fear, no hope, can weigh against his love,
Which is the perfect law, wherein men's souls
Can walk in joyful freedom all their days."

"Alas, alas! I may not urge thee more;
I feel that God is with thee; and I know
That strange dark mysteries of ancient days,
Of God's dread incarnation, float about,
In dim philosophies, and sacred lore,
And dark traditions of the elder time.
But ne'er till now have I beheld their might,
In all the grandeur of a living faith.
Thy faith is strange. What are its promises?"

"What never eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard;
What never yet the soul of man conceived."

"Oh blessed art thou in thy holy trust,
That makes thee wise, and brave, and kind, and true.
I'll go my ways, a very humble man—
A poor old man. I will not reason more.
I would that some one else were Kalifa."

XII.

THE DEVIL AND THE ANGEL.

The palace of the Gardens,
On the silver Zenderoon,
Is veiled by leafy terraces
From summer's sultry noon;
And blossom-wove verandahs,
On gilded pillars all,
That gleam along the open front
Of that gay garden hall.
And here and there, and everywhere,
Are sparkling fountains seen,
'Mid clouds of bloom for ever fair,
And groves for ever green.
And o'er the stately woodland,
As far as meets the eye,
The city's gilded minarets
Are burning in the sky.

Sparkling through the deepest shadows,
Danced a little airy thing,
Fairer than the fairest blossom
In the gardens of the king:
The flower-like child, sweet Fatima,
The Princess of the Persian land,—
A little maid, but yesterday
An infant in her nurse's hand.

Out and in, o'er every terrace,
Round the fountains, through the trees,
Went a light about the palace,
Like the sun o'er autumn leas.
As the sun goes chasing shadow,
Down the yellow autumn day,
Danced the little wayward maiden,
Chasing every cloud away.

A light came o'er the swarthy faces
Of the servants, where they stand
By the fountains, in their places,
Waiting on their lord's command.
And her grandsire's grim old soldiers
In the court stood silent by,

With a look of rugged kindness,
Kindly smile and watchful eye.
But there was an eye that glistened
More than any, more than all;
And there was an ear that listened
For her footsteps' silken fall,
With a strange intense devotion,
Centred all on her alone;
With a fierce heart's wild emotion;
With a love before unknown.
For her grandsire loved her dearly,
Dearer than his royal crown;
To his heart came ne'er so nearly,
All the pride of his renown.

Abbas, who made Turk and Tartar
Bow before the Persian Khan;
Who had driven the fiery Affghan
Through the gates of Hindustan;
Who had conquered many a province;
Who had smote his lords with fear;
Who had doom'd to desolation
All that he had held most dear;
Who had slain his stately children

In their beauty, side by side,
Viewing with a tyrant's terror
What was once a father's pride;
Who had slain his stately children
In the spring-time of their years,
All save one—the hapless Meerza,[18]
Blinded by his father's fears,—
Blinded in his noble youthhood,
Left in sorrow lone and lorn,
Where the depth of midnight darkness
Drowned the splendour of his morn.

Never look'd the king, his father,
On the wreck that he had made,—
On the hopes that he had blighted,
On the lonely living dead.
But his early love for Meerza
Deepened by his long remorse,
And his unavailing sorrow
Every blessing made a curse.
Weeping o'er his children's slaughter,
Brought the self-bereaved king,
To the prince's little daughter,
All the love that sire could bring.

In her presence all was gladness—
All was beauty, all was light;
In her absence, all was sadness—
All was darkness, all was night.

And she danced through grove and garden,
Bringing joy where joy was rare,
With a haze of sweet enchantment
Shining round her, everywhere:
Even on her hapless father,
Who was blest when she was by,
Though her smile of beauty never
Shone on Meerza's sightless eye.
Oh! he loved the sweet one dearly,
All the bliss that he could know,
Was her presence in his darkness,
Like the light of long ago.

Love was strong; but deeper, stronger,
Was his fierce unholy hate.
Pity could not conquer vengeance,
On the author of his fate.
And he heard with horrid pleasure,
Hissing hot among his tears,

That his daughter was the treasure
Of his grey old father's years;
That he loved her deeply, dearly,
More than any, more than all;
That he watched her late and early,
In the garden and the hall.

"Where are now my stately brethren?
Hark! their spirits haunt my room,
Pointing to their blood-stained father,
Pointing to this living tomb!
Filling earth and air with curses:
Hot and burning like a flame,
Ev'ry curse comes quenched in horror,
Hissing out the murd'rer's name.
Allah! I renounce the tyrant,
Who hath cursed the life he gave;
And invoke my noble brethren
To bear witness from the grave.
Oh! my child! my life, my darling!
Oh! my love, my bliss, my woe!
Oh! my poor dark brain is burning!
Flames within mine eyeballs glow!
Hark! she comes! Through all my pulses

Throbs her footstep! Oh, 'tis she!
And another! 'Tis her mother!
All on earth most dear to me!"

Like a sunbeam through the darkness,—
Radiant in her loving haste,—
Twining round a marble statue,
Twined she round her father's breast.

Clasping her with maniac frenzy,
In a long and wild embrace,
Kissing o'er with love and anguish
All her terror-stricken face.
He cried, "My child! my life, my darling!
Thus we meet, no more to part!"
"'Tis your daughter!" shrieked her mother.
"Ha! it is King Abbas' heart!"

Wildly rang his frenzied laughter
Through the chamber of despair:
Vainly shrieked the frantic princess,
As those sightless eyeballs stare.
Hissing hot his demon pleasure,
In their fountains dried his tears:

He had spoiled the only treasure
Of his father's dreary years;
Filled the king's old days with sorrow,
Wakened all his old remorse;
Blighted every coming morrow
With a never-dying curse.

And he laid the lily maiden
On her speechless mother's breast,
And he kissed their silken tresses,
And their silent lips he pressed;
And before the shrieking servants
Wildly kissed them o'er and o'er;
Love was strong, but hate was stronger,
Much he loved, but hated more.

Now the garden blooms in silence,
Now the fountain flows alone;
Now within the royal chamber
Sits Despair upon the throne.
Never more shall voice of gladness
Cheer the grey old king again;
Never more shall merry childhood
Soothe him in his hours of pain;

Never more will she he loved so—
More than any, more than all—
Lead him out by grove and garden,
Light with love his homeless hall.
Fatima, the loved and lovely,
She who blessed him all day long,
She who seemed to be a pardon
Sent from heaven for many a wrong,—
She is gone! and, sad and lonely,
Broods the king the weary time;
O'er his four, his stately, children,
Slain in all their princely prime;
O'er his father, broken hearted;
O'er his nobler brother's fate;
O'er the dooms the stars imparted
'Mid the grandeur of his state;
O'er the child he loved so dearly,
Light of all his loveless ways;—
Lost the gladness of his palace!
Lost the solace of his days!

XIII.

THE HIDDEN ANGELS.

When Sorrow, and her haggard sister Pain,
Sit down within the cold damp shade of death,
Hope smiles upon them from the breast of Faith,
While sceptred Glory shakes his plumes in vain.

And kings may ride before their banner'd chiefs,
And hear the war trump's long triumphant swell
Their golden presence to the nations tell,
And scorn the glittering mockery of their griefs.

While humble-hearted, loving, and alone,
The eye that Christ hath opened by his touch,
But sees the embassies of heaven in such
Sad presences as shake the troubled throne.

And calm, smooth brows may hide a world of woe,
Which, like the sea, seems boundless from the strand;
While faith foretells that far-off other land,
Where all our sunsets' rarer glories go.

And when the trouble comes, and when the years,
With clouds of memories that hide the sun,
Their long dark course in dreary silence run,
The mournful sisters strew the path with fears.

While Hope, that rests upon the breast of Faith,
Sits down with Sorrow, and her sister Pain,
And knows that heaven hath sent the loveless twain,
As handmaids to the awful angel, Death;

And calmly looks upon the solemn three,
And says, "Our Father sent you; it is well.
I know the message which your sad lips tell—
Ye are the messengers of love to me."

The princess in her chamber, sorrow-worn,
Saw kindness in their seeming cruel eyes;
While sat the king in Persia's paradise,
By terror racked, by anguish overborne.

They shed round her an ever gentle light—
Round him they dropp'd the darkness of despair;
To her they told the limits of her care—
To him they filled with horrors all the night.
He saw a dagger in the courtier's hand,
The poison'd chalice at his festive board;
Yet he was all great Persia's mighty lord,
And she a captive in a helpless land.
She knew not when her children, ever dear,
Came longing from the hills to see her face;
Nor when the warriors of the mountain race,
The champions of her cause, lay hidden near.
She heard sweet hymns come through the midnight trees,
Without the fortress, o'er the rocky river:
She deem'd it was her children, watchful ever,
Who came her midnight solitude to ease.
And many a night the hymns went up the sky,
And she her low sad voice of sweetness raised,
And joined their plaintive melody, and praised
Her Lord, to think her darling ones were nigh.
And lo! at times, while rose their distant strain,
She to the gloomy torture-cell was borne—
Was scorched with fire, with red hot irons torn,
While they sang on, unknowing of her pain.

Oh, weary years! oh, more than weary years!
Oh but to clasp to her poor breast again,
The sweet Mignonnè, and the children twain,
The hope of earthly hope, the fear of fears!

And, at the last, they came—no more to part!
Their presence ever filled her lonely room;
Their shadowy forms cast sunshine through its gloom;
They came, through her poor fancy, to her heart:
As love its immemorial solace seeks,
The children whom she lost long years ago,
She seemed at times to smooth each infant brow,
And bathe her face among their dewy cheeks.

Two travellers rode along the dusty way—
One old and grey, and one was young and brown:
The one the Sooffee, with his patched gown,
The robe more sacred than a king's array;
The other was a lad, who scarce had seen
The suns of thirteen summers come and go,
With dark, soft eyes, and broad, courageous brow,
And youth-hood stealing o'er his boyish mien,
As did the sun-brown o'er his rosy face;

With look half shy, half bold, as if his blood
Was quelled by awe, and of his native mood,
Some living grief had curb'd the fiery pace.
A conflict of emotion ruled his eyes,
Now flashing fierce as sabres in the sun—
Now troubled o'er with thoughts, that melt and run
Now laughing starry clear as summer skies.

The Sooffee told the youth his mother's story;
But o'er the sad home-burden of the years,
That hapless lady's history of tears,
He poured the golden light of martyr glory.
He urged no more the mystic's sacred theme
Of spiritual reunion with God,
Which taught the soul to scorn its clay abode,
And made its life relations all a dream—
The soul an angel in a prison cell,
Of which it had at best a casual care,
Instead of making it a temple fair,
Wherein to worship, as therein to dwell.
And all the doctrines of his saintly days
Were overshed by doubts; and all the lore,
That fostered his long trust in deeds that wore
A sanctifying light to public gaze—

His fasting in the lonely desert place,
That called for praise, and without praise was lost;
And even the robe, which Persia's princes boast,
Grew royal purple on their sacred race,
Were waxing worthless in the old man's eyes.
"And is it true," he murmured, "is it true,
That love alone the spirit can renew,
Through faith in one celestial sacrifice?
To what end have I lived, if it be so?
That God's own Son came down to earth to die,
And, rising, lit with glory, through the sky,
The path whereby his faithful followers go.

* * * * * *

What creed, my son, do your brave kinsmen hold?
What doctrine teach the child of Kelavane?
Who, for her faith, endureth so great pain,
Whose tears more precious are than mines of gold."

The youth replied, "My blessed mother's creed—
How could I kneel to any God save hers?
How could I trust in any faith save hers?
What she has bled for, father, I will bleed."

"I know Demetrius is his mother's child.
But your dear mother's Galilean Lord

Among the mountains is not much adored.
Whate'er their creed be, it is sore defiled."

"That may be, father; but Mignonnè's there,—
My second mother, and my sister too,—
She knows the truth my blessed mother knew,
And fixed it in our hearts, with many a prayer.
And Aymon, foremost of the mountain lords,
Him, too, my blessed mother taught the faith;
And old Prince Ismael, ere the chieftain's death,
Wept like a child at dear Mignonnè's words.
And though, perchance, they had strange ways of old,
(They are so far apart from other lands,)
The cross of God at every corner stands,
The people's hearts are neither hard nor cold."

"You love them, then, whate'er their creed may be?"

"Ay! love them, Sooffee! Truly, were my mother
In that brave land, I would not seek another.
They have been more than kinsmen all to me;
But I can nowhere rest where she is not.
And my sweet sister, like a lily white,
As fair as any star in all the night,
She weeps for ever o'er our mother's lot.

She'll die, I think, now that she knows it all:
When we were children, we forgot in play.
She was an infant when we went away;
But, oh! how oft I see her sad tears fall,
And cannot help them! Oh! her heart will break!
She sits alone, with pale, fair, downcast face,
And big black eyes, brimful of her distress,
And starts and weeps upon Mignonnè's neck.
Alas! she knows so much, and fears much more.
And dear Mignonnè, too, how she doth weep,
And pray all night, when others are asleep!
She tries to hope, but hope itself is sore.
Though long ago, she was Prince Aymon's bride,
She will not wed him till the day arrive
When our poor mother, if she be alive,
Is safe and happy by her children's side."

"She is alive, my son, and yet may bless
Her loving children, in their former home.
It is in that dear hope, that I have come,
To take thee to great Abbas, face to face.
For many a care his royal bosom wrings.
'Tis said that power doth make a wise man mad;
And yet the power to grieve, may make thee glad.
'Tis servile courtiers dishonour kings.

King Abbas loved his lords to fawn and lie;
From youth to manhood, and to dreary age,
One honest front provoked his fatal rage;
Rebellion lurked in every fearless eye.
And yet he scorned them all. A single score
Of honest men, who dared say No, and die,
Would alter many a nation's destiny,
And make great kings revere their people more.
'Tis thus thy faithful mother, Kelavane,
Triumphant, o'er her unavailing woes,
Looks down, like some great angel, on her foes,
Appals, and purifies, the souls of men.
Wide as the world, and glorious as the truth,
The mighty influence of her life will spread,
To quicken hearts to faithful purpose dead—
To wake new fervour in the souls of youth.
The grander spirit of the early years,
When men were gods, hath filled her with its might,
And set her, crowned with stars, above the night,
To light us through our destiny of tears."
Even his old eyes had seen the saintly glory,
Shed round her forehead from the eternal throne,
That shines for ever and for ever on,
Some martyr-witness of the sacred story.

XIV.

THE LAST HOPE.

The Garden Palace on the Zenderoon
Is hushed in beauty, and the sleepy joy
Of flowers, love languishing on silent leaves,
With sweet excess of radiant rapture faint.
The fountains flow o'er glowing terraces,
And glittering verandahs, bright with gold,
Are hung about with blossom and with leaves,
And music floats about beneath the trees;
And deep, dark woodland archways whisper rest.
And all is beauty hushed into repose.
But peace and happiness, ah! where are they
Amid the glories of that grand demesne?
Within the palace everything was changed.
The silken courtiers rustled out and in,
With shrugs and whispers; and the chamberlains
Looked half askance, and bustled through the hall.

The ribald soldiers, laughing in the courts,
With careless confidence, scarce turned about
To answer glittering lords, who went and came.
And yet King Abbas lived within those walls,
Though well-nigh blind, and friendless altogether;
In his old age, a shadow on the throne.
The king reclined upon a silken couch,
Before an open balcony of leaves,
And sighed with weary languor, and with pain,
When entered Kaled, in his patched robe.

" Welcome, good Sooffee," said the faint old man,
" Your reverences are not frequent now."

" I bow before my gracious lord, the king.
I am no courtier; the task is mine,
To pray for him afar, not praise him here."

" Ay, ay, good Sooffee, we are two old men,
Tis time that we should speak the naked truth."

" 'Tis ever time, great king, to speak the truth."

" I know that, man; did ever Abbas lie?"

"To no one save himself, most gracious lord."

"That is a reservation more than bold,
Against my truth."

"Ah, no, most mighty king!
Thy truth was never yet gainsaid by me.
But hast thou been as candid with thy soul
As with thy courtier lords? and has thy heart
Divided truth from falsehood on the lips
Of sweet voiced adulation?"

"Sooffee, yes.
Think ye I know not, when my courtiers speak,
What every phrase of empty homage means?
I know the loving shouts, that rend the sky,
Are true, because I am the people's friend.
I know that courtiers, hanging on my breath,
On which depend their butterfly delights,
Speak truly, in accordance with their truth.
For am I not the fount of all wherein
They have their joy? and gratitude,
All eager-eyed for bounties yet to come,
Makes gods of those whose word can give and take."

"Yea, even so, my lord. I know thy truth
Was never darkened by so mean a thing,
That kingly glory could not make it fair.
But ah, alas! I am a poor old man,
And read not by the light of glory now,
The characters of kings and mighty men."

"By what light, then, old man, dost thou peruse
The big bold characters, in which are writ
The life of Abbas, that the world may read?"

"The light that comes when eyes grow dim with age,
And life hath nothing left for hope or fear,
Save in the cause of justice and of God."

"Thou'rt bold—thou'rt over bold."

"I love my king."

"Small token this of love. Thou'rt strangely changed."

"I've look'd on Sorrow's most majestic robe,
With light eternal round it like a fringe—"

"What knowest thou of sorrow, Kalifa?
Thy pale, cold life of passionless repose,
Of contemplation and ascetic gloom!
Old man, old man, the trouble that doth leave
A living soul, like Baalbec, in the desert
A mighty ruin, buried among sand—
And all the heart, like Babylon the old,
A memory of woe, amid a land
Bituminous with death? Ah, no! no! no!
Thou speak'st of sorrow as a pageant; ah!
Thou know'st it not, old man, thou know'st it not.
No eye should see the sorrows of a king,
That in their kingliness are terrible,
That none could bear who hath not worn a crown."

"Yet there be deep red wounds in battle given,
That will not hide; and where the pall of death
Sweeps darkling o'er the summer fields of joy,
And where the head of truth lies nobly helpless,
Beneath the iron heel of armed power—
Such have I seen, O king; the mighty woe,
That breaks the heart to glorify the soul,
When sorrow stands transformed into a joy—
That have I seen. And though I'm old and grey,

I've bowed my head before it, and passed on,
Subdued into the silence of a prayer."

"What is thy meaning? where beheld you these?"

"In Georgia—in your captive, Kelavane."

"Thou traitor! hast thou come to mock thy king?"

"King Abbas knows his servant is no traitor."

"Audacious meddler!"

"I'm a poor old man,
Whose duty is to speak the truth, and die.
And knowing that my lord would hear the truth,
I came to tell, what others dared not tell.
So hear me, mighty king, and be my judge."

"Thy poor old brain is weaker for its years;
Yet I will let thy dotage speak; say on."

"I've brought this captive princess's orphan boy,
To plead his mother's cause, most gracious king."

"The hostage that was pluck'd from Kouli Khan!
Thou'rt bold—thou'rt more than bold; that Georgian boy
Is here, within my reach, most duteous Sooffee."

"And under Kaled's surety he has come."

"Thy surety, foolish priest! And what is that?"

"The surety of the Kalifa, O king!
As sacred as the Persian monarch's word."

"Ay, ay! thou knowest well our kingly care
For sacred things. But do not trust too much
To thy poor robe. If it should cloak deceit——"

"It is the robe that raised King Abbas' throne!"

"Enough! What of this woman? By my crown,
I'll give away a province, broad and fair,
To bend her spirit to our blessed creed!
It is the cause of God; it is not mine!—
The holy Prophet's cause! A jealous care
Of truth, old man, has made me seeming cruel;
And she hath so blasphemed our holy faith.
Thou reasonedst with this princess well, no doubt?"

"O king! I reasoned with her long ago;
But words of mine were like the powerless wave,
That beats against the beach of Trapobane,
While sits the isle in beauteous solitude,
And breathes its fragrant balms upon the sea.
I was like Omar quenching Ali's fire,
A wand'ring harper singing to the stars.
And she amid her sorrow, like a beam
Of silver moonlight in a wilderness,—
A thing of heaven, but lent to earth awhile!
I could not read the mystery of her eyes,
That saw in God her all-sustaining friend.
I could but feel the power within her soul,
That did the softness of a child endow
With all the strength with which an angel treads
The azure pathways of the firmament.
I sought the fast foundations of her faith
Among the sand; but found the rock was there,
In one eternal sacrifice of love.
And not for recompense, and not for fear—
She giveth love for love, with such content,
And full devotion of a saintly soul,
That I could neither mock myself, nor her,
With words that were like tapers to the sun—
Or gewgaw spangles to an angel's robe."

"By Allah! she has made thee like herself,
An infidel, old Sooffee! Is it so?"

"The mighty Abbas knows the Sooffee's faith—
Its comprehensive sympathy with truth,
In all things, and all creeds. It is his own.
And strange, O king! this princess in her soul
Hath won from nature that supreme repose
Of unity with all infinitudes,
Which makes all circumstance but drops of rain
Upon the plumage of an ocean bird."

"A woman, and a Sooffee! Oh! no, no!
Thou'rt mad! And yet I wish she had been saved!
And yet she surely suffered by the law.
It was the law which tortured her; not I;
It was not I who, all these weary years,
Kept her a captive; but the Persian law!
The law is just and good, old Kalifa!
Bring in the boy! It was the law, not I!"

The Sooffee entered, with his long white beard,
And with him came the nut-brown Georgian boy,
With smooth, white brow, and heavy glossy locks.

The dim-eyed king stretched out his hand, and said,
"Come nearer, boy! I do not see thy face.—
Ha! have I touched a fair young head of curls?
I've touched but one! but one! How old art thou?"

"This is my thirteenth year."

"A sweet young voice!
Oh, Allah! such her years—her golden years!
My murdered Fatima! My lost, lost child!
I've touched no youthful head, no youthful voice
Hath breathed its music in my longing ear
Since she was on my knee! My poor, lost child!
My child! my child! my child! my murdered child!
Oh, Sooffee! now thou seest an old man's grief!
Why camest thou here to wake it up anew,
With fair, fresh, loving youth, where never youth,
Or hope, or joy, hath been since she was here,
And never, never will be any more!
Thou wilt not leave me, boy? Thou'lt dwell with me?"

"Ay! set my noble mother free, O king,
And I will be thy servant all my days!
Will love thee! worship thee! will die for thee!

Will serve thee on my knees, the humblest slave
That ever stood within these outer courts!
Oh! give me back my mother, thou great king!"

"Yea, I will give thee back thy mother, boy!
For had my poor, lost child been living now,
She would have prayed to give thy mother back.
Oh! Sooffee, Sooffee! had she been alive,
I might have recompensed his mother's woes!
My child! my child! Now, go thy ways, old man;
For we are both old men—both weak and old.
I feel my soul the lighter for this act.
Here, take my signet; set the prisoner free.
Meet escort thou shalt have; and come again.
Farewell, farewell! bring back the Georgian boy.
My child, my child! A king, yet desolate!"

And thus they left the self-bereaved king,
Alone with desolation,—all alone,
With none to love him, and with none to love;
With scarce the hope that some dear angel's wing,
Whose old heart-longings lured it from above,
Might shield the sad old man upon his throne.

XV.

GONE!

Hear ye that shriek, that rends the silent morn,
Within the valley lands of Ardevill?
A silver ring of sorrow, wildly shrill,
So sadly sweet, so woefully forlorn.

"My mother! oh, my mother!" is the cry.
"Come, dear Mignonnè—Aymon, rise and go!
I see my mother in her dying woe—
I hear my mother's voice of agony!

"The cell of death is reddened o'er with flame,
Her sacred form, her blessed face, I see;
I hear her faint, sad, accents call on me,
I hear her breathe her long-lost children's name!

"Come, let us rise and go! Oh mother, mother!
Oh, nature calls to nature; though her eyes
Have wept away their holiest memories,
I know her; oh my mother! oh my mother!

"And she has suffered there these long dark years!
Oh, let us rise and go! She prays—she faints!
Oh, mother, mother! ever blessed saints!
Where are ye, in this awful time of tears?

"Where is the hand of Heaven, to set her free?
Oh, sweet Mignonnè, let us rise and go!
The flame is round her, poor dear child of woe!
Oh mother, would that I might die with thee!

"Oh, woe! oh, woe! where is the loved one gone?
The poor forsaken mother of the land?
With no kind voice, no tender heart at hand,
She treads her fearful paths of life alone.

"Soul of my soul! come, sister, come! oh, brother!
Oh, woe! oh, woe! I see her sunken eyes—
She faints, she sinks, she dies!—oh, woe! she dies!
Oh, dead! dead! dead!—oh, mother! mother! mother!"

With long dark hair, and pale young awe-struck face,
The little maiden, Lena, stood opprest,
With that dread vision which broke through her rest,
A form of marble, cold and motionless.

Within the valley lands of Ardevill
They lay concealed, while Aymon and his men
Kept guard till their young brother came again,
Their dearest hopes to crush or to fulfil.

And as they rose, and rode along their way,
They met old Kaled and the Georgian boy;
And all their woe was changed to sudden joy,
And all their night was lighted into day.

Not all, not all—the poor pale Lena wept;
Though Abbas' ring was on her brother's hand,
And he, the Prince within his native land,
Her soul the record of her vision kept.

Alas! the joy that fades into a dream.
Alas! when day is darker than the night,
And beauty dies away before the light,
And hope is but the meteor's fitful gleam.

Athwart the dawn that cheer'd the eyes of all,
There passed a cloud of fear. Two friars stood
Within the sombre shadow of a wood,
And bore a burden hidden by a pall.

They would have fled; but turned and looked again,
And came and bowed their heads, and clasp'd their hands,
As when a mute before his master stands;
Then said, "The Lord hath closed the years of pain!"

How sank the heart's high tide, foreboding ill!
What sight was that? Alas! poor Georgian boy!
Thus robbed of all the radiance of his joy.
Ah, pale young prophetess of Ardevill!

The sacred clay, the tyrant's hand had cast,
All unanointed, on the open hill;
In blacker vengeance, for his baffled will,
That holy faith had vanquished to the last,

Through all those days of anguish and of woe,
The countless sufferings of her hallow'd years,
Wherein her griefs had robbed her of her tears,
And placed the martyr's crown upon her brow.

And these poor monks had ta'en the dead away,
For Christian rites, in secret, and by night;
And heaven had blessed them with the blessed sight,
Of those whose love would shroud the sacred clay.

"Oh, mother, mother!" sobbed the dark-eyed youth,
"Is this the promise of that tyrant king?
Is this the hope in which I bore his ring?
Is this the end of virtue and of truth?

"Of all the worth, wherewith the holiest saint
May stand apparelled on the front of time,
To live the victim of a villain's crime,
To die when woe its anguished breath has spent?

"Oh, woe! oh, woe upon the Persian's head!
Hush, father, in this grief I am a man.
Hath he not slain that ever-blessed one,
And heaped dishonour on the honoured dead?

"And shall I fold my hands, and say Amen?"
"Hush, brother!" Aymon whispered, "watch and wait.
Be still, for Silence is the slave of Fate;
To-day we mourn!—to-morrow——wait till then!"

"Oh! dark, unholy thoughts!" poor Lena cried;
"I feel your hearts throb with the sin of death,
To bar the blessings of her dying breath!
She weeps! she weeps! I see her by your side!

"Mignonnè, see! Here, mother! holy one!
She prays thee, brother! Aymon! see, see, see!
Kneel down! the blessed shade is blessing thee!
And thee—and thee—and me! Ah! gone! gone! gone!

"Wait, mother! wait upon thy child! I come!
Farewell, Mignonnè! dearly loved, farewell!
Oh! brother, brother!—Aymon!—all farewell!
Oh! mother, wait!—thy child is coming home!"

Alas! she sank on sweet Mignonnè's breast,
Whose woeful shriek rose through the lonely wild,
And lo! the pale, cold mother and her child,
Lay hush'd together in their long, last rest.

And all were stricken down with speechless woe;
Then said the Sooffee, "Listen, O my son!
Avenge not—grieve not! God's rewards are won:
These walk in glory, shining as they go!"

And as the mourners knelt, there rose a strain
Of low, melodious hymns within the wood,
And solemn calm reigned o'er the solitude,
And there was peace at length for Kelavane.

And they began to tread their tearful way,
When came a tramp of horsemen, and at hand
They saw the Persian satrap and his band
Close round, triumphing o'er their easy prey.

"Ha, ha!" the Persian cried, "we've met at last;
I've kept your mountain proverb, 'watch and wait.'"
"Yea," said the Kalifa, "we, too, have met."
And, as he spake, a sudden wonder pass'd

O'er every Persian face. "Know ye this ring?
Behold thy victims, and behold thy doom!
A murder'd princess, robb'd ev'n of her tomb!
Thou slayer of the honour of thy king.

Let every man kneel down." And so they knelt.
"Here stands the Prince. Great Abbas speaks
through me.

I came from him to set your captive free.
Alas! too late. Her wrongs are now unfelt.

"But as for thee, dishonour is thy name,
Thou stain of manhood, and thou curse of God,
That blasts the path which holy feet have trod,
With deeds that redden all our land with shame.

"Go, bind his hands, and let the meanest man
Take off his sword, and break it on a stone."
In vain the satrap knelt. The deed was done.
He bore no more the name of Kouli Khan.[19]

Then were the loved and lost ones borne away,
Attended by their tyrant's cavalcade;
And old Sothemus met the noble dead,
And laid their ashes where their fathers lay.

NOTES.

[NOTE 1, page 6.]

The sun is low in Carthuell.

Carthuell is a name by which Georgia is known among the Caucasians.

[NOTE 2, page 8.]

By Terahazon and the sea.

Terabazon is the Eastern and more ancient name of Trebizond.

[NOTE 3, page 10.]

I've seen the sun of Atteghe break through a deeper gloom.

The Circassians call themselves the Atteghe.

[NOTE 4, page 12.]

When Mansour and his murids rode the first invaders down.

It is needless to repeat the story of Elijah Mansour, the prophet-warrior of the Caucasus; or of the bravest of his murids, and his successor in command, Shamyl Bey, who, since this poëm was written, has been made a prisoner by the Russians, and is now a resident in St. Petersburg.

[Note 5, page 12.]

The proud Ossetian, clad in mail that some Crusader wore.

"We purchased from the natives and the Armenian merchants at Bombora, a number of splendid sabres and poniards, of the finest workmanship, and evidently of great antiquity, but so well preserved that they appeared as if they had only yesterday left the hands of the armourer; several of the blades were engraved or inlaid with gold characters. There were also full-length inscriptions on them, surmounted with the head of our Saviour, or a saint, which generally ran thus:—'Parmi Dey y par my Rey. Ne me tire pas sans raison, et ne me remets pas sans honneur.' From the number of weapons found among this people, of European fabrication, and said to have belonged to the Crusaders, it is highly probable that the soldiers of the cross, having been captured by the Turks, had escaped from them to the mountains of the Caucasus.

"This opinion is corroborated by the fact which I give you on the united testimony of several Armenian merchants who had visited that part of the country. It appears that at the base of Mount Elburz a tribe still exists, called Khervisour, who have preserved among them Christianity to the present day, and in manners and customs differ entirely from any other, and are not excelled by any in bravery or love of independence. They are still habited in ancient armour; the figure of a cross distinguishes their bucklers, and one of red cloth is constantly worn on the breast. It is generally supposed, from the similarity of their weapons with those of the Normans and French of the middle ages, that they are descended from Gallic ancestors. We are also informed by the Armenian merchants that in the interior of Abasia, between Soubachi and the Alps, a greater number of remnants of the ancient Christians exist than in any other part of Circassia.

Some churches are in tolerable preservation, and, from the accounts of our informants, must have been very fine buildings. They also assured us that some of them even still contained the sacred books and ancient armour which, according to the tradition of the natives, were deposited there by a band of Christian warriors as votive offerings for their deliverance."—*Captain Spencer's Travels in Circassia*, vol. i. pp. 322, 323.

[NOTE 6, page 17.]

For he had swept the mosque of beauteous Ali.

Abbas, though he appears through life to have openly violated that law of the Prophet which forbids wine, affected extreme piety; and there was hardly a year of his reign in which he did not make a pilgrimage to some sacred shrine. During two weeks that he was at Nujuff, he daily swept the tomb of Ali—an envied office, which none but men of exemplary life are allowed to perform. The reader will no doubt discover that the phrase, "Three parts drunk and one divine," ought to have been quoted.

[NOTE 7, page 18.]

As was the custom of the Persian Khan.

"The action (between the Turks and Persians in Alderbijan) was hardly over before sunset, and the pursuit continued for many hours. An event occurred after this victory alike characteristic of the times and the hero by whom it was gained. As Shah Abbas sat on the field of battle, carousing with his chief officers and some of the principal captives, a man of uncommon stature and soldier-like appearance was led past by a youth, who had just made him prisoner. The king demanded who he was. 'I belong to the Kurd family of Mokree,' said the captive. The king happened to have an

officer of the house of Mokree in his service, of the name of Roostum Beg,—'Deliver this captive to Roostum Beg,' said the king. But that chief refused to receive him. 'I hope your majesty will pardon me,' said he; 'my honour, it is true, calls for his blood, but I have made a vow never to take advantage of an enemy who is bound and in distress.' This noble and generous speech seemed to reflect upon the king, who, in his irritation, called on the captain of the guard to strike off the head of the prisoner. The gigantic Kurd, the moment he heard this command, broke the cords with which he was fettered, drew his dagger, and darted upon Abbas. A struggle ensued, and in the general hurry of all to aid their sovereign, every light was extinguished, and no one dared to strike in the dark. After a moment of inexpressible horror, all were relieved by hearing the king twice exclaim, 'I have seized his hand! I have seized his hand!' Order was restored and lights brought. The brave captive was slain by a hundred swords, and Abbas, who had wrested the dagger from his hand, reseated himself in the assembly, and continued (according to his historian) to drink off goblets of pure wine, and receive the heads of his enemies, till twelve o'clock at night."—*Sir John Malcolm.*

Anthoine de Govea, the historian of Abbas, says in his "Relations de Guerres," "It has always been the custom of the Kings of Persia to receive the heads of their enemies after a battle, and is so at this moment."

[NOTE 8, page 22.]

Ye have the wit of Mutawukal's fool.

The Caliph Mutawukal was assassinated by a band of conspirators, headed by his son, in the year 350, as he was drinking with his friends. His vizier, seeing he could not defend his master, exclaimed, "Oh, Mutawukal, I do not desire to

survive thee!" The jester, otherwise minded, had crept into a corner on the commencement of the work of death, and after the assassination of the Caliph and his minister, he exclaimed; "Oh, Mutawukal, I do most heartily desire to survive thee!" and the assassins, bursting into laughter, gave him his life for his jest.

[NOTE 9, page 30.]

There is a land
Where foot of stranger never yet hath trod.

"With respect to the Caucasus in general they (the Russian officers) are ever ready to admit that there are districts in the interior to which they have never been able to penetrate; and they seem to agree in the prevailing opinion that these unknown districts are both extensive and fertile, and lie between the two great alps, Elburz and Kasheck; adducing as a reason for this conclusion, that the Circassians invariably taunt them by saying, 'You may establish yourselves on the coast, and maintain possession of the sea, but you will never be able to force an entrance into the alpine home of the Komi and Ingushes; and there we have cornfields and vineyards, meadows and grazing grounds, sufficient to maintain all our own people, and even more than we want.'"—*Captain Spencer's Travels.*

[NOTE 10, page 31.]

Attelick.

It was the custom in the Caucasus for the male children of persons of distinction to be placed, in childhood, under the guardianship of some warlike friend, who was called his Attelick, to be reared, without the interference of parental weakness, in the exercises and accomplishments necessary to his station.

[Note 11, page 62.]

The crown that Cyrus gave to Lar.

According to various Persian authorities, when Abbas the Great's general, Aly-verdi Khan, conquered the mountainous district of Lar, which stretches from Shiraz to near the seaport of Gombroon, among the spoil was found a crown, called "Jag Kai Kosroo," or the Crown of Cyrus, which had regularly descended from Lar, the son of Goorgeen Melad, one of the Pehlwahs (or heroes) of the court of Cyrus. Ibrahim Khan was the ruler of the province at the time of the conquest, and this crown, with which Lar was said to have been invested by the hand of Cyrus, had been worn by his predecessors during the intervening period.

[Note 12, page 63.]

The land from whence the men of old
Received, they say, their ancient gold.

"Reinseggs, the Russian mineralogist,—one of the earliest travellers in the Caucasus, who was sent out, many years before the war commenced, with presents to the chieftains, but really with the intention of ascertaining the truth of the reports respecting the existence of gold in the mountains,—in his report to the government says that he discovered on the south side of the territory of the Suoni, the galleries and shafts whence the ancients, in all probability, had been accustomed to get their wonderful supply of gold and silver. From that time all traces of them have been lost; hence it is concluded that the mountaineers, dreading the inroads of foreign invaders, destroyed every vestige of them. That gold exists in that part of the Caucasus there can be no doubt, as this metal is found in the Ingour, and in all its tributary streams that have their source in the alpine regions of Mount

Elburz. It is also worthy of remark, that shortly after the report of Reinseggs, the Russians commenced their aggressive wars in the Caucasus, no doubt partly stimulated by the hope of obtaining possession of these valuable mines. Indeed there is not an intelligent Russian, whatever may be his political opinions, who does not believe that these mines will one day prove a source of inexhaustible wealth to any power which may obtain possession of the country. Since Reinseggs time, several attempts have been made by adventurers to obtain an entrance into the mysterious home of the Suoni, but they never returned."—*Captain Spencer's Travels.*

[NOTE 13, page 67.]

The Sacred Grove.

"We cannot conclude our sketch of the religions of this interesting and primitive people without alluding to their sacred groves, carrying us back, as they do, to a period of the most remote antiquity, anterior to the existence of any creed save the simple worship of the Almighty by the first cultivators of the soil and guardians of flocks and herds. . . . . On the eve of departure for any warlike expedition, the warriors of the Caucasus are accustomed to repair to their sacred groves for the purpose of performing propitiatory sacrifices, as well as various other rites and ceremonies. The most venerable and illustrious patriarch, taking a sword, strikes it against the sacred oak, at the same time exhorting the assembled multitude to contend with unflinching zeal and perseverance against the enemy they are about to encounter. Then addressing the oak, he says, 'Sacred tree, thou hast witnessed from time immemorial the performance of this ceremony by our fathers: they have conquered. May their blessed spirits hover over us their children, and guide our swords to victory.' If the attack is directed against the

Russians, he concludes by saying,—'Remember the man who falls in this contest is immediately translated to Paradise.' To cut down a tree in these sacred groves, or despoil them of their offerings—for every warrior appropriates to himself a tree, which he adorns with some trophy of his victories or offering of gratitude to the divinity—is considered a sacrilege, and punishable by death."—*Ibid.*

[NOTE 14, page 98.]

Hallowed badge.

The mantle, or patched garment, called the *kircha*, as the symbol of the spiritual power of the Sooffees, has always been an object of peculiar veneration in the East. Sir John Malcolm says,—"It is by the transfer of their mantle that these holy men transfer their empire over the minds of their disciples to their successors. Their power is grounded on their sacred character, which rests on their poverty and contempt for worldly goods. Their mantle is in general their all, and its transfer, therefore, marks their heir. Some of these mantles can be traced for several centuries, and their value increases with their age. They become relics, which are almost worshipped, and their possessor has many disciples and followers, who venerate the tattered and patched garment much more than the person who wears it."

[NOTE 15, page 98.]

The Sooffavean throne.

Chardin says the Sooffavean kings are the vicars or successors of the twelve Imâns. They were revered and deemed holy on account of their descent from the Sooffees of Ardevill, who were regarded as the descendants of Moossâh, the seventh Imân. The origin of the power of the family lay,

according to many historians, who differ only on the question of father or son, on the following circumstance:—Timour, when he overran the East, paid a visit to the Suffee Sudder-u-deen—or, as some say, his father Suffee-u-deen—and promised him any favour that he should ask. "Release the prisoners whom you have brought from Koom (Turkey)," said the saint. The conqueror at once complied, and, according to Mukond and other Persian historians, they were so grateful for the liberty which they had acquired, that they devoted themselves and their children entirely to the saint and his successors. Their numbers increased, and their faith remained unbroken, and the descendants of the captured Turks enabled a descendant of the Sooffee of Ardevill, Shah Ismael, to ascend the throne of Persia.

[NOTE 16, page 99.]

Men said, "That is the wise old Kalifa."

The dignity of Kalifa can only be attained by long fasting and prayer, and by complete abstraction from all worldly pursuits. The man must die before the saint can be born. The preparation for the third class of Sooffeeism, which elevated to the rank of angels, requires long and awful probation. Great numbers perish in their attempts to reach it. The person making the attempt must be a holy Murid, a disciple who, by devotion and abstraction, has already advanced beyond the necessity of the common usages and forms of religion. He must commence his endeavours to attain a state of higher beatitude by a long fast, which some sects conceive should be not less than forty days. During this fast he remains in solitude, in a contemplative posture, and receives no sustenance but what is necessary to preserve life. On the patience and fortitude which he displays during this severe test, his character greatly depends; but when the skeleton (for such, after

the fast, the disciple always appears) walks forth, he has still many trials to endure. He must either wander over deserts, or remain companionless in some frightful solitude, occasionally seeing the Kalifa, to which he is attached; for the chief merit of the Sooffees, through all their ranks, is devotion to their spiritual leader. When the Kalifa dies, he bequeaths his patched mantle—all his worldly wealth—to the disciple whom he esteems as the most worthy to be his successor; and the moment the latter puts on the holy mantle, he is vested with the powers of his master.

[NOTE 17, page 99.]

Kaled, the Sooffee of the holiest rank.

Sooffeeism has existed in some shape in every age. It is the same in essentials with the theories of Plato and Pythagoras. In India Sooffeeism is exaggerated into unnatural asceticism and self-torture; but in Persia it is a life of self-denial, fostering abstraction from every earthly object, and centring the whole soul on a mystic worship of the divinity. In its common shape, vulgarized by individual fancies, it is made to comprehend upwards of twenty degrees of purification towards divine beatitude. They tell us, with the German Pantheists, that the soul of man, and the principle of life, that exist throughout all nature, are not from God, but of God, and thus establish an equality between the creature and the Creator. "The creation," they say, "proceeded at once from the splendour of God, who poured his spirit on the universe; as the general diffusion of light is poured on the earth by the rising sun, and as the absence of that luminary creates total darkness, so the partial or total absence of the divine splendour or light causes partial or total annihilation." Malcolm, in his "History of Persia," says:—"The Sooffee doctrine teaches that there are four stages through which man

must pass, before he reaches the highest, or that of divine beatitude; when, to use his own language, 'his corporeal veil is withdrawn, and his emancipated soul will mix again with the glorious essence from which it has been separated, but not divided.' The first of these stages is that of humanity, which supposes the disciple to live in obedience to the holy law, and in observance of the rites, customs, and precepts of the established religion, these being admitted to be useful, in regulating the lives of the vulgar, and restraining within proper bounds such as cannot reach the heights of divine contemplation, and might be corrupted and misled by that liberty of faith, which enlightens and delights those of superior intellect and more fervent devotion. The second stage, in which the disciple attains power or force, is termed the road or path, and he who arrives at it leaves that condition in which he is only admitted to admire and follow a teacher, and enters the pale of Sooffeeism. He may now abandon all observances of religious forms and ceremonies, as he exchanges 'the practical for the spiritual worship.' But this stage cannot be attained without great piety, virtue, and fortitude; for the mind cannot be trusted in the neglect of usages and rites necessary to restrain it when weak, till it hath acquired strength from habits of mental devotion, grounded on a proper knowledge of its own dignity, and of the divine nature. The third stage is that of knowledge, and the disciple who has arrived at it is deemed to have attained supernatural knowledge—in other words, to be inspired; and he is supposed, when he reaches this state, to be equal to the angels. The fourth and last stage denotes his arrival at truth, which implies his complete union with the divinity."

[NOTE 18, page 115.]

The hapless Meerza.

The following tragical narrative is extracted from Sir John Malcolm's "History of Persia:"—

"In his conduct to his own family the character of Abbas appears in so horrid a light, that we can scarcely permit our minds to indulge in that admiration which his other measures are calculated to inspire; but we must consider that one of the most terrible conditions on which human beings hold absolute power, is the necessity of viewing those who are nearest in blood as most to be dreaded. The next heir of a despot must always be the object of his jealousy, which will generally increase in proportion to his good qualities and his popularity. This certainly was the case with the great Abbas: he had four sons, whom he beheld with delight until they attained manhood, and began to display those qualities which he must, as a father, have desired them to possess. But when the wishes of his heart seemed fulfilled, he could not bear that the eyes of his subjects should be directed for a moment to any object but himself. Those who served his sons with zeal and attachment he considered as his enemies; and the courtiers near his person laboured to aggravate his feelings, hoping to destroy rivals whom they conceived eager for the enjoyment of their situations. A want of confidence in the king produced alarm in his sons. They saw themselves the objects of jealousy that misinterpreted all their actions. We may believe that when they found their loyalty could not preserve them from danger, they listened to those counsellors who pointed out a direct though dangerous path to safety.

"Abbas was led to believe that Suffee Meerza, his eldest son, a youth as remarkable for valour as generosity, had formed a design against his life, in consequence of his having put to death a nobleman who was the friend and favourite of that prince. He forgot that he was his father. He first

applied to Karachee Khan, the brave general who had defeated the Turks at Shiblee, to become the executioner of Suffee. The veteran leader threw himself on the ground, and entreating his sovereign to deprive him of life, rather than render his existence hateful by compelling him to become the murderer of so gallant a prince. Abbas did not urge him further, but he soon found a willing instrument in Behbood Khan. That noble, on the pretext of revenging a private injury, stabbed the prince as he was riding to the court, and took refuge in the stable of the king, who, pretending to respect a usage which renders that asylum sacred, refrained from the execution of the assassin. . . . . .

" Soon after the death of Suffee Meerza the remaining sons of Abbas were deprived of sight, through the cruel suspicions of their unnatural parent. The fate of one of these princes (if we can credit the testimony of a cotemporary English writer*) was attended with circumstances of the most tragical nature. This youth, whose name was Khoda Bundah, was as much distinguished for his courage and his talents as his elder brother; but he was more cautious to avoid that attention which he feared would rouse the jealousy of his father; and he not only kept flatterers at a distance, but hated to hear the just praises which his actions obtained for him. His conduct only added to that fame which constituted his danger. The first act by which Abbas showed his suspicions was ordering the tutor and attached friend of his son to be put to death. Conscious that the only crime of this officer was too great a regard for his master, the prince hastened to the court, and in giving vent to his honest indignation lost all consideration for his own safety. We are told that he was provoked to madness, and in the presence of his father and sovereign drew his sword. The fatal signal for his death was given, but Abbas relented so far as to deprive him of sight. Shut out from the light of day, the prince became gloomy and des-

* Sir Thomas Herbert.

perate; nothing could give him pleasure; and his life passed in venting curses and brooding over plans for vengeance on the author of his being and his misery. He had two children, the eldest, Fatima, a lovely girl, was a great favourite of her grandfather, over whose mind she acquired an astonishing influence. Abbas appeared miserable when little Fatima was not near him; and her voice alone could soothe him when ruffled by those violent passions to which he every day became more subject. The prince learnt with savage delight how essential his daughter had become to the happiness of his father; and seizing her, as she came one day to fondle on his bosom, with the fury of a maniac, he in an instant deprived her of life. Her astonished mother shrieked, and told him it was his darling daughter that he was destroying. Instead of attending to her, his next attempt was to seize his infant son, that he might vent his fury on him. The child was borne from him by the distracted princess, who sent immediately to inform Abbas of what had occurred. The rage and despair into which the sovereign was thrown gave a momentary joy to his son. Glutted with his terrible vengeance, he concluded the scene by swallowing a dose of poison, which in a moment terminated his miserable existence. Such were the scenes which closed the latter days of Abbas, who, worn out by affliction of mind, and from a disease which his intemperate habits had increased, died in his favourite palace of Ferrahadabad, in Mazanderan, at the age of seventy."

[NOTE 19, page 148.]

Kouli Khan.

Both Meerza and Kouli Khan are titles of honour: the former of a general kind, like lord; the latter of a special, like duke, or marquis.

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